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Schwarzenegger unveils jobs initiative at Harbor Gateway visit

By Douglas Morino Staff Writer

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At Ace Clearwater Enterprises in Harbor Gateway, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger met with employees and outlined his jobs plan. (Brad Graverson/Staff Photographer)

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger visited a

Harbor Gateway manufacturing plant Monday to unveil a state ballot initiative designed to create 100,000 new jobs and attract business to the state.

"California always leads the way," Schwarzenegger said during a press conference at Ace Clearwater Enterprises, an aircraft parts maker. "We're not going to wait for the recession to come back. We're creating our own plan to create jobs."

The governor first announced the California Jobs Initiative in his final State of the State address last week. Aside from creating 100,000 new jobs, the \$500 million proposal seeks to provide training for 140,000 people to help them qualify for better jobs.

Under the plan, employers would be paid for training expenses and receive \$3,000 for each worker who completes training and stays on the job for nine months. Money for the program would be borrowed from the state's unemployment compensation disability fund, and be repaid by eliminating subsidies for select employers.

If the measure qualifies for the ballot and is voted into law, the state would, in essence, be paying half of the payroll tax for each new employee for a year.

"It's going to avoid layoffs and create a more business-friendly economy," Schwarzenegger said, the sound of moving machinery echoing

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behind him in the warehouse.

In addition, the governor said the initiative would reach beyond job training measures into other areas that would aid businesses. Among the proposals, the initiative would:

Expand the \$10,000 home buyer tax credit to include the purchase of new or existing homes.

Implement a series of changes to regulations governing class-action lawsuits and product liability suits.

Cap punitive damage awards to eliminate frivolous lawsuits.

Eliminate sales tax on green tech manufacturing equipment, like solar panels.

Speaking before the governor, Torrance Mayor Frank Scotto lauded the proposal and highlighted the city's relatively low unemployment rate - currently 6.5 percent, well below state and national averages.



Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger meets with Ace Clearwater Enterprises welder Bob Rice at the Harbor Gateway plant before outlining his jobs plan. (Brad Graverson/Staff Photographer)

"It's still nothing to brag about," Scotto said. "We understand the South Bay region must get back to work."

The state unemployment rate was 12.3 percent in December, with employers shedding 10,200 jobs during the month, according to the California Employment Developmental Department. The U.S. unemployment rate currently stands at 10 percent.

In 2004, Schwarzenegger visited the same facility just east of Torrance to pitch measures aimed at reforming the state's workers' compensation system.

On Monday, the governor arrived for a brief midmorning tour of the facility's manufacturing

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warehouse, and stopped to shake hands with employees before taking the podium.

"Anything that flies has parts made by this company," Schwarzenegger said of Ace Clearwater, which added 100 new jobs last year. "They're very creative, very ambitious. This is an example of the job growth we'd like to see across California."

Kellie Johnson, president of Ace Clearwater Enterprises, thanked the governor for his support of businesses in the state.

"I believe (the job plan) sends a message that our governor is working with us," Johnson said.

Also appearing with the governor Monday were Vicki Bradshaw, secretary of the state Labor and Workforce Development Agency; Jack Stewart, president of the California Manufacturers and Technology Association; and Dan Keaton, chairman of the Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce.

Schwarzenegger's comments come as state lawmakers grapple with a looming \$20 billion deficit. The governor said his top priority in his final term of office is bringing jobs to the state.

"Each time we create jobs, it has a ripple effect," Schwarzenegger said. "We want to help people rebuild their dreams, help rebuild the California dream."

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