

The Detroit News Op-Ed

Brown: Ex-Im Bank helps Michigan businesses grow

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“Exports create and sustain jobs for millions of American workers and contribute to the growth and strength of the United States economy. The Export-Import Bank contributes in a significant way to our nation’s export sales.” President Ronald Reagan’s insight has never been truer than it is today.

In Michigan we have come through difficult economic times with many of our businesses, big and small, selling to new customers overseas. With over 95 percent of potential buyers outside the United States, the need for strong exports has never been greater.

The Export-Import Bank is truly small government with a little more than 400 employees worldwide supporting \$27.4 billion of U.S. exports, including over \$850 million from Michigan alone, while in 2014 generating a surplus of \$675 million for the American taxpayer. That’s why Michigan needs Congress to re-authorize the U.S. Export-Import Bank now.

I recently traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with legislators on the need for Ex-Im reauthorization. I found bipartisan support for what should be a non-partisan issue. All our political leaders cite job creation and retention as their top priority. Despite this bipartisan support the Ex-Im authority was allowed to expire on June 30th.

At a time when members of both parties have pledged to create jobs, this makes no sense. A vote against Ex-Im is a vote to hand U.S. export sales to competitors overseas, outsourcing more jobs that Michigan cannot afford to lose.

I was shocked when opponents of the Ex-Im criticized the Bank not by disputing its economic importance, but simply on anti-government ideological grounds. On the facts, the issue isn’t close. Ex-Im has been a cornerstone of U.S. trade policy since FDR. It helps companies – particularly small businesses, which account for nearly 90 percent of Ex-Im transactions – negotiate the often-confusing world of international trade, with its numerous different laws, customs and risks.

And for aerospace businesses, Ex-Im is especially critical. Ex-Im transactions support approximately 50,000 aerospace jobs each year. With nearly 70 percent of U.S. made commercial aircraft destined for the export market, no sector is as sensitive to the health of the overall export business.

Critics complain Ex-Im “picks winners and losers” in the market, but foreign countries provide far more export financing at levels up to ten times what Ex-Im offers. Without Ex-Im, the deck would actually be stacked drastically against U.S. companies trying to compete globally. Shutting down Ex-Im is “picking losers” in the market, and the losers would be businesses here in Michigan that fight every day for overseas sales to help our economy grow.

Our elected officials in Washington should face the facts: Michigan needs the Ex-Im Bank.

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