What are 1,300 Jobs Worth?

Last week I wrote about the proposed subsidies for a new downtown convention center hotel that would bring significant economic benefits to Los Angeles. Thankfully the City Council agreed with us and voted to support the project.

This week, I’m repeating a similar theme—with as much at stake.

In 1958, Nissan began marketing its affordable vehicles to post-war, middle-class families in the United States. The reason is simple: Nissan needs to cut expenses, and both of those locations are cheaper alternatives to Southern California. We’ve seen this before when the defense industry began shuttering factories in the early ’90s. California became too expensive, and such an unfriendly place to do business, that companies left here in large numbers. From manufacturing plants to bank headquarters, California’s corporate graveyard is littered with the tombstones of companies who have left the Golden State for other parts of the country.

According to Nissan, the company has yet to make a final decision. One thing is clear: government will need to offer some incentives to keep the company—and its good paying jobs—here.

There is nothing wrong with that. After all, our economic system rewards competition. Cities across the country compete each day for jobs. We must do the same.

Those who say that incentives are giveaways must understand that if Nissan relocates, we lose everything it contributes to the community. So giving back some economic incentives in return for keeping jobs here is nothing more than sharing in the economic benefits. They are not giveaways.

As the organization charged with attracting and retaining jobs in our region, the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation is all over the problem. We all need to support LAEDC in its efforts, and we need to make sure that Nissan understands that we want them to stay in Gardena. They provide good jobs. They’re a good corporate citizen.

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce understands that our region’s economic well-being is tied to our ability to retain marquee companies, especially those that have been here for decades.

Last year, the City of Los Angeles business tax reform package helped level the playing field in order to attract and retain local businesses. It’s now the County’s opportunity to do the same.

Keep Nissan in Gardena—and let’s make sure their 50th anniversary is celebrated here.
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