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## Defense conversions must focus on jobs, labor says

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In organized labor's view of things, most downsizing defense contractors aren't the hapless victims of the end of the Cold War but instead uncaring corporations ready to turn their backs on workers and communities after decades of taxpayer support.

That perspective on the ongoing defense conversion issue in Silicon Valley and the nation was presented Tuesday night at an informational hearing chaired by Rep. Norm Mineta, D-San Jose, and attended by a number of county officials.

The session was organized by six local environmental and conversion groups as part of a public relations and

organizing campaign they are calling "Upsize." It's designed to make job creation a



Mineta

major part of defense conversion efforts, something that Upsize's planners argue has been too low a priority in even the few local conversion efforts under way.

The meeting brought to the surface an issue that has been a sub-current in defense conversion discus-

sions. Labor has brought much of the pressure to the cause while management often has showed little interest.

"We have a power imbalance here," said Michael Closson of the Center for Economic Conversion in Mountain View. "Labor and community groups are very serious about conversion, but corporate America has been very slow to respond."

With most of the decisions about corporate conversion made in inaccessible boardrooms, many of the speakers urged the elected officials to join them in pressuring companies to pay closer heed to workers and jobs.

Several speakers said that before any taxpayer money is spent on either conversion programs or environmental cleanup efforts the defense companies receiving

the funds must agree to some kind of jobs plan.

And the federal government was criticized for emphasizing technology development at the expense of job creation in many of its conversion programs. For example, Carol Webb of the South Bay AFL-CIO, said a recent Rutgers University study found that only 5 percent of the money awarded as part of the Technology Reinvestment Program, considered the federal government's flagship conversion program, will lead to immediate job creation.

Defense firms urged local companies to work more closely with labor unions, citing

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the example of H.R. Textron, a Southern California company that has developed collaborative relationship with its unions as it tries to grow out of its defense roots.

Jim Quillin of the California Conference of Machinists said, "I

wish companies would come and talk to us. The unions are willing to hold out their hands to companies to stop the flight of jobs."

Overall, said Ted Smith of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, "The public-private partnership needs to be redefined. Currently, the public provides the money, and private companies decide

what to do with it. We need a new social contract."

Lockheed Missiles & Space Co. and United Defense L.P., formerly FMC Corp., appeared at the hearing, and representatives for both companies portrayed defense cutbacks as the unfortunate but inevitable result of declining orders.