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RCGA leaders push for biz-growth incentives

By Tim Logan

Regional business leaders threw their biggest annual dinner Thursday night, and took the opportunity to bend the ear of state lawmakers in the audience and push for more economic development incentives and state funds to help launch high-tech startups.

It was the annual dinner of the Regional Chamber and Growth Association, and among the sold-out crowd at the Chase Park Plaza in St. Louis was Gov. Matt Blunt, Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder, Secretary of State Robin Carnahan and a slew of state and local politicians.

They heard Gary Rainwater, chief executive of Ameren Corp. and outgoing RCGA board chair, call for an end to caps and sunset provisions on the \$40 million Missouri Quality Jobs program and other business-attraction incentives.

“These programs are investments, not incentives,” Rainwater said.

Next up was Graybar chief executive and incoming RCGA chair Bob Reynolds, who pushed for an expansion of the “Grow-Me State” Initiative, a 10-month old project designed to help fund high-tech startups.

“It is important to grow these jobs here in Missouri,” not in nearby states which, Reynolds said, invest up to 28 times as much in high-tech incentives.

But it wasn't all business at the RCGA dinner. The group also paid tribute to the Schnuck family, which received its “Right Arm of St. Louis” award, and heard from political satirists The Capitol Steps.

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