

Business, charity coalition seeks aid for aerospace industry

By David J. Lynch
The Orange County Register

A coalition of business and social-service groups Thursday announced plans to pressure California's elected officials to help stem a flood of aerospace-industry jobs migrating to other states.

The new group, Californians for Aerospace Leadership, plans to begin in 30 days an advertising campaign highlighting votes by state lawmakers on aerospace issues.

"All of California has a stake in the viability of the aerospace industry," Ron Cedillos said.

Cedillos, president of Cedillos Testing Co. of Long Beach, said California is losing aerospace jobs to other states that offer businesses fewer regulations and more political support. The effect of that exodus is felt throughout the state, partly in reduced support for universities and charities, according to the group.

Since 1986, California has lost 150,000 jobs among aerospace contractors and related suppliers, according to a May 14 McKinsey & Co. study, which was funded in part by the industry.

Douglas Aircraft Co. of Long Beach plans to build its next passenger jet outside California. Likewise, Lockheed Corp. decided to build a new Air Force fighter in Georgia.

Industry executives long have complained of onerous state environmental and workers' compensation regulations as well as a lack of political support.

Aerospace contractors send state coffers \$2.5 billion annually in taxes, Gov. Pete Wilson said via a satellite hookup. The industry also contributes \$27 million to support

engineering programs at state universities and \$25 million to non-profit groups, according to the group's officials. Amid the aerospace slump, those charitable contributions fell 8.5 percent in the last year, according to Beryl Geber of the United Way.

Wilson became the first official to sign onto the plan, faxing a copy from Sacramento to the California Museum of Science and Industry, site of the news conference. Additional copies are being mailed to lawmakers in Washington and Sacramento.

Cedillos said he will raise money for the campaign from grass-roots supporters. Major aerospace companies deliberately are being kept at arm's length, he added.

Cedillos was joined at the Los Angeles news conference by James Gray, a trustee of the state university system; Geber of the United Way; Hank Wilfong, representing small and minority- and disabled-owned businesses; Gene Hale of the Black Businessmen's Association; Keith Renken of the Boy Scouts of America; and Bob Pratt of Volunteers of America.