

Wilson vows to mull changes to keep defense jobs in California

BY TIM DEADY

Staff Reporter

California Gov. Pete Wilson pledged to study changes in worker compensation laws and environmental procedures in an effort to keep defense contractors from moving out of the state, according to officials who attended a special meeting with industry executives last month.

In addition, Wilson told the executives that elected officials should be held accountable for their support or lack of support for the industry and that defense contractors should publicize officials' positions on military and aerospace funding, said people who attended the meeting.

"He was very clear on the fact that the industry accounts for more than 1.2 million jobs in the state and that elected officials must be held accountable. He said contractors should tell voters about politicians' stance on defense spending," said Ron Cedillos, president of Cedillos Testing Co. in Long Beach. Cedillos was instrumental in arranging the unprecedented meeting.

Industry officials who attended the meeting with Wilson and other state officials in Sacramento included Douglas Aircraft Co. President Robert Hood, Rockwell International Corp. Chairman Donald Beall, Northrop Corp. Chairman Kent Kresa, Lockheed Corp. Chairman Daniel Tellep and Hughes Aircraft Co. President D. Kenneth Richardson.

Douglas is based in Long Beach, Rockwell in El Segundo and Northrop in Cen-

tury City, while Lockheed has its executive offices in Calabasas and Hughes is in Los Angeles.

Cedillos, who has been active in Republican Party activities, arranged for the meeting because of the loss of aerospace and defense jobs in the state. Some losses are due to cuts in defense spending and others are because companies have moved jobs out of California.

Cedillos, whose company is a subcontractor for the major corporations, said he will continue his efforts to retain defense jobs and further meetings are possible.

William Duplissea, special assistant to Secretary Karl Covitz of the California Department of Business, Transportation and Housing, said Wilson told the executives he is willing to consider changes in worker compensation regulations to lower costs for large employers like the defense firms.

The governor also indicated willingness to study ways to reduce the contractors' costs of complying with the state's stringent environmental regulations.

"The contractors are willing to comply, they just have a problem with all the money it takes to comply. There are structural glitches in the compliance process that cost them millions of dollars a year," said Duplissea.

Cedillos and Duplissea said the two-hour meeting was unique in that it was probably the first time industry leaders together have met with the state's chief executive.