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Tsongas Gets High-Tech Tutorial

Mack Prototype making specialized medical products

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Reporter

GARDNER Congresswoman Niki Tsongas took a tour of Mack Prototype to learn more about the manufacturing company from President Ric Perry on Tuesday morning.

Mack Prototype's 80,000-square-foot facility at 424 Main St. in Gardner hosts eight injection presses, which focus on making a low-volume amount of very specialized parts. The company also uses 3-D printers.

Perry said since 2001, the business has shifted to mostly manufacturing custom parts for the medical industry, including parts used in medical operations such as knee replacements that provide low to zero risk for patients.

He engaged Tsongas in a conversation about promoting manufacturing jobs in the district and dispelling notions that young adults should look into other sectors for employment.

"Manufacturing has sort of gotten a black eye. Mothers don't want their kids getting dirty, but it's quite the opposite. The facility is very well kept up. It's high-tech work," he said.

He added that the 30 employees at the company receive good benefits, and their jobs require an understanding in engineering and computer skills.

She asked him if the industry has changed much over the years, and he said the company uses "the same basic injections" for molding, but the plastic used in manufacturing parts has gotten stronger and more chemical-resistant, one factor behind the company advancing in its technology.

One concern Perry addressed with Tsongas was the issue of regulation. An example he brought to light was the inclusion of a 2.3 percent medical device tax in the Affordable Care Act, which he said is especially burdensome because the tax is on gross sales and not profit, meaning it doesn't consider the cost for Mack Prototype to make its products that are then taxed.



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News staff photo by Andrew Mansfield Mack Prototype President Ric Perry shows Congresswoman Niki Tsongas one of the 3-D printers the company uses during a tour of the facility.



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News staff photo by Andrew Mansfield Mack Prototype President Ric Perry shows Congresswoman Niki Tsongas one of the machines the company uses during a tour of the facility.

'There's been so much regulation the last few years.' — Ric Perry, Mack Prototype president

Another example he used was that the company now has to spend \$4,000 a year just to register with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which gives the agency the ability to come in at any time for inspection.

“There’s been so much regulation the last few years,” he said, adding that his staff now needs to spend more time making sure the company is up to date on every mandate.

“You’ve given me some food for thought. It’s especially hard for smaller businesses because you don’t have the people. It’s worth detangling some of that,” she said.

Tsongas, D-Mass. 3rd District, represents a district that has a history of manufacturing, with Gardner to the west and larger cities such as Lowell to the east. Westminster, Ashburnham, Fitchburg and some precincts of Winchendon are also part of the district.

She was joined by Mayor Mark Hawke, state Rep. Jon Zlotnik, D-Gardner, and Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce President and CEO James Bellina during the tour of the factory, which is across the street from Woods Ambulance and Lynde True Value Hardware.

Mack Prototype is a subsidiary of Mack Group, which is headquartered in Vermont and has 10 locations in the U.S. and Mexico.