



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Some Good News about Jobs

JEFFERSON CITY – One hundred years ago, the A.P. Green Fire Brick plant in Mexico, Missouri began producing firebricks, which are used to line industrial furnaces. Mexico eventually became known as the “Firebrick Capital of the World,” employing as many as 4,000 people during World War II. By the time the A.P. Green plant closed in 2001, the company had just 118 employees. The next year, Mexico’s last brick plant closed, leaving another 200 unemployed.

Mexico was ideally suited for producing firebrick because the area’s clay was very heat-resistant and was the perfect component for firebricks. The bricks lined industrial furnaces used at steel manufacturing plants and cement producers, but as those industries declined or moved overseas, the demand for firebrick dropped.

Last week, on the 100th anniversary of the opening of the A.P. Green factory, a new company breathed some life into the old brick plant and the community. Mid America Brick & Structural Clay Products, LLC closed its deal on the purchase of 100 acres and the buildings of the former firebrick plant. Mid America Brick will produce face brick, which is used in the construction of homes and businesses. In time, company CEO Frank Cordie says the face brick plant will create up to 80 new jobs and produce more than 60 million bricks per year. The company hopes to begin producing face bricks by next spring.

Mexico, like a lot of our small towns, has been struggling to cope with job losses in recent years, and the economic crash that started late in 2008 just made things worse. I want to recognize the efforts of the City of Mexico and the Mexico City Council for working with Mr. Cordie and others to make this brick manufacturing plant a reality. Mid America Brick received a \$1-million Action Fund Loan from the Community Development Block Grant Program to redevelop the A.P. Green plant. The loan is being used to help pay for machinery

and equipment and to provide working capital for the new plant. The \$21.9-million project will include \$12-million in capital improvements to the factory.

Mid America Brick Vice President David Adams says demand for face brick is growing because homebuilding is starting to rebound and the country's inventory of face brick is low.

I am hopeful Mid America Brick will find the same success in Mexico as a young engineer named Allen P. Green found in 1910 when he bought the Mexico Brick and Fire Clay Company and turned the city into the Firebrick Capital of the World. In time, the city may have to change its slogan to the "Face Brick Capital of the World."

If you have any questions or comments about these or any other issues give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an email at wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.