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## THE PENINSULA

### Ambassadors' Dialogue in Michigan

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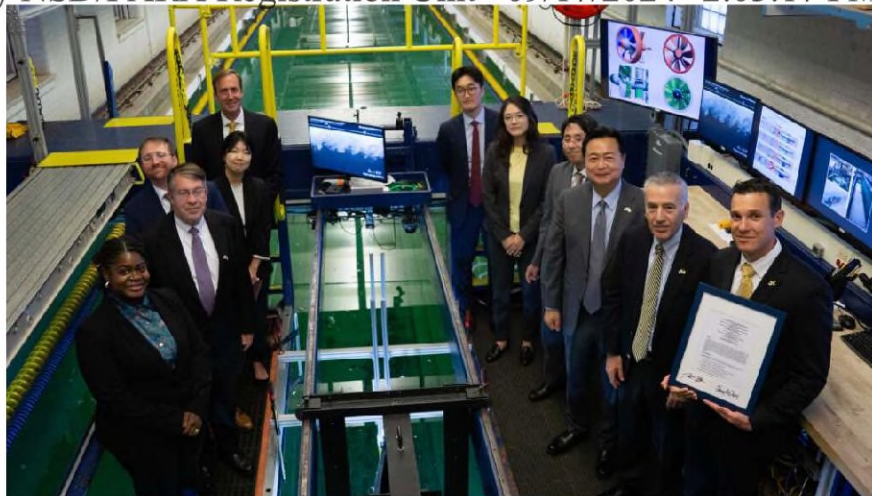
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As part of KEI's signature Ambassadors' Dialogue tour, US Ambassador to the Republic of Korea Philip Goldberg and Korean Ambassador to the United States Cho Hyundong visited the state of Michigan for site visits to Korean-invested factories, meetings with state leaders, and engagements with students and educators at the University of Michigan. The East-West Center estimated that the state of Michigan exported \$1.6 billion in products to South Korea in 2023, which generated over 6,200 jobs, and that \$7.2 billion in South Korean investments have created over 8,860 jobs in Michigan since 2003.

In line with Michigan's investment priorities in mobility innovation, semiconductors, and defense and aerospace, South Korean companies such as LG Energy Solution and SK Siltron CSS are expanding production capacity in electric batteries at its plant in Holland, Michigan, and in semiconductor components manufacturing at plants in Bay City and Auburn Hills. The expansion of capacity also means an expansion of jobs at those sites.

At the University of Michigan, Ambassadors Goldberg and Cho received a briefing on an educational exchange memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed last July between the University of Michigan, Seoul National University, and HD Hyundai Heavy Industries to establish an on-site training and education program at HD Hyundai facilities in Ulsan, South Korea. The partnership will strengthen the maritime industrial workforce in both countries by developing a stronger pool of marine engineers and naval architects capable of contributing to ship design, production, research and development, and experimentation. The University of Michigan briefing included a visit to the Marine Hydrodynamics Laboratory's towing tank, which is used to test new ship and propeller models.



The two ambassadors led a panel discussion hosted by the University of Michigan's Nam Center for Korean Studies and the Weiser Diplomacy Center, with an audience of about one hundred people. The subjects covered included the extension of US-South Korea cooperation in both the security and economic dimensions, the durability of recent improvements in South Korea-Japan relations, and the significance and sustainability of US-South Korea-Japan cooperation following last year's Camp David Summit between US President Joe Biden, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol, and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation hosted a business roundtable with the two ambassadors and South Korean investors in the state, such as LG Energy Solution, SK Siltron CSS, Hyundai Mobis/Hyundai Motor, and LT Precision Michigan. Ambassadors Goldberg and Cho met with Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, who noted the strong presence of University of Michigan alumni in various leadership roles in the country, having led a trade mission to South Korea earlier this year.



"Michigan is a leader on the global stage, and it was an honor to once again share the story of our state with leaders from South Korea," said Governor Whitmer. "This meeting was an excellent opportunity to strengthen a relationship that has brought jobs, investment, and economic prosperity to Michigan and made a real difference for both our countries. I look forward to working together to grow our economies, empower workers and business owners, and build a bright future."

The meetings emphasized the state of Michigan's commitment to sustaining its competitiveness in mobility innovation, semiconductor production, and the defense and aerospace sectors, as well as the state's commitment to maintaining a strong educational platform and workforce development capabilities in each of those sectors. The presence and profile of Korean economic and educational cooperation in the state of Michigan is clearly on an upward trajectory and will likely continue to expand for the foreseeable future.

*Scott A. Snyder is President and Chief Executive Officer at the Korea Economic Institute of America (KEI).*

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