Business, education, Star Wars missiles, and an extraordinary four years in Alabama’s political history were on the agenda in north Alabama when the Raytheon Company and the Business Council of Alabama co-hosted a major summer event in the Rocket City’s Research Park.

The two-day event in June included Raytheon officials, company suppliers, an economic outlook by a national economist, BCA members, and north Alabama elected officials for a discussion of the critical roles that manufacturing and business-backed education have in creating jobs.

A tour of Raytheon’s missile assembly facility provided conference attendees an intimate look at how missiles capable of shooting down other missiles are made, a la Star Wars, and ship-borne defensive missiles. A BCA Manufacturing Advocacy Council meeting rounded out the Raytheon-BCA session.

An evening reception, sponsored by Raytheon and the BCA, saluted guests that included Raytheon suppliers and corporate officials, BCA members, and elected officials. It was a fitting prelude to informative meetings in the Raytheon Company’s Weapon Integration Center in Huntsville’s Research Park and a tour of its missile production facility at nearby Redstone Arsenal.

BCA Chairman Fred McCallum, president of AT&T Alabama, introduced Raytheon Weapon Integration Center Director Randy Stevenson. “We’re creating positive changes in our education...
system,” McCallum said.

Stevenson has been in Huntsville since 2012 overseeing construction and operation of Raytheon’s high-technology missile production facility. In keeping with the theme of the meeting, Stevenson could have been speaking for all manufacturers when he praised suppliers who keep Raytheon production lines rolling.

“Raytheon is only as good as those who support us,” Stevenson said. “Our supply chain support is very important.”

Raytheon is a significant advocate of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education that provides vital exposure to what it takes to prepare for high technology and advanced manufacturing careers, Stevenson said.

BCA President and CEO William J. Canary presented Stevenson with a leadership medal from the BCA and the MAC for “Excellence in Manufacturing” in recognition of “creating economic strength and leadership, commitment to innovation, and creating jobs.”

Dr. Chad Moutray, the chief economist for the National Association of Manufacturers, linked the importance of technical education and manufacturing’s future. He said the nation will need one million manufacturing workers by 2020. The key to attaining them is education and early student exposure to skilled technical positions, he said.

“Where is the next generation coming from?” he asked, adding that business urge educators to expose students in the middle-grades to skilled occupations and create education programs that lead to skilled jobs.

Dr. Moutray explained that bad winter weather hurt the nation’s economic growth in 2014, limiting it to 2.3 percent. Since consumer spending is 70 percent of Gross Domestic Product, when consumers don’t venture outside, the effect is felt throughout the economy. He predicted economic growth of 3.2 percent for 2015.

Dr. Moutray said the NAM continues to seek research and development tax relief, to limit harmful effects of bad regulation, and to advocate for reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank prior to the end of its current charter Sept. 30.

The BCA, the exclusive representative of the NAM in Alabama, supports reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank.

Introducing Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, Canary said Marsh and House Speaker Mike Hubbard led a historic pro-business takeover of the Alabama Legislature in 2010 after 136 years of dominance by one political party. “We have made progress since then,” Canary said.

Marsh, R-Anniston, reviewed the last four legislative sessions under the control of a pro-business supermajority of House and Senate members who changed the environment with business-friendly legislation.

Marsh recalled how as a businessman in 1998 he knew nothing about politics but he ran for office because he was concerned about the state’s direction. For the first 12 years in the Senate, Marsh said, there wasn’t a pro-business Legislature. “Organizations like the BCA played a critical role in education and mentorship and they have to keep on doing that.”

Top: State Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, updates Salute to Manufacturers attendees at the Raytheon Company’s headquarters. Marsh said the 2010-2014 pro-business Legislature passed significant laws that were important to business.

Center: Business Education Alliance of Alabama Chairman and President Dr. Joe Morton said business continues its involvement in education on many fronts.

Above: Dr. Chad Moutray, chief economist for the National Association of Manufacturers, explains the economy and the importance of manufacturing in the nation’s economic stability.
role in bringing balance,” he said.

After taking office in 2010, a supermajority of pro-business legislators passed ethics reform and gave the Ethics Commission subpoena power, ended double-dipping at taxpayer’s expense, restricted gifts to public officials to a maximum of $250 a year from the previous $250 a day, eliminated the ability of political operatives to hide the source of campaign contributions by laundering money through political action committees, and required ethics training for elected officials and lobbyists.

The Legislature also eliminated the costly Deferred Retirement Option Program and approved a constitutional amendment to link legislative pay to a benchmark independent of the Legislature.

Pro-business legislation included updating the 1992 Taxpayers Bill of Rights law, work force development, streamlining business taxes, increasing capital opportunities for small businesses, “right-sizing” government, and making patent trolling a crime.

“Everything accomplished has been accomplished with a pro-business Legislature,” Marsh said.

Marsh said the state needs an educated work force. “I am convinced we will not move forward if we don’t solve the education problem,” he said.

“If we want to have economic development, if we want to have best education, we have to make hard decisions in the next four years of how we prioritize our state budget, how we get it done,” Marsh said.

“My goal is in the next four years is to challenge the Legislature on the big picture. We have to work closely with groups like the BCA and other business groups.”

Picking up on the theme, former state school Superintendent Dr. Joe Morton, who is chairman and president of the Business Education Alliance of Alabama, said his group is working on a plan to dramatically increase the Alabama high school graduation rate.

The BCA created the BEA in order to further marry business and education.

“We have got a lot of allies and are building an army of more allies every day,” Dr. Morton said. “We want to identify issues that need addressing and pull together a positive game plan. We’ve got to undertake a critical piece of education reform and dovetail a review and outline a roadmap how to raise the graduation rate of every high school.”

Dr. Morton said Alabama has the potential to be so much better.

“Our goal is to bring business and education together … and put together a positive game plan,” Dr. Morton said. “Alabama is at a unique situation where business and education are supported by the private sector.”

The BCA’s Manufacturing Advocacy Council meeting, conducted by MAC co-Chairman Ronnie Boles, president of General & Automotive Machine Shop, included Raytheon, BCA members, Moutray, Morton and BEA Finance Chairman Jay Love. The roundtable discussion covered issues important to manufacturing and the need for early technical education opportunities for students who will become potential employees.

“We need to get people headed in the right direction,” Boles said.

“We want to make sure the employee is at the education he needs to be,” Love said.

Raytheon’s Stevenson concluded the conference with a guided tour of Raytheon’s missile production facility at Redstone Arsenal.
# BCA’s Manufacturing Advocacy Council

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**Ex Officio Members**

- **Dr. Tommy Bice**
  - State Superintendent
  - Alabama Department of Education

- **Ron Davis**
  - President
  - Alabama Automobile Manufacturers Association

- **Jim Byard**
  - Director
  - Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs

- **Ed Castle**
  - Director
  - Alabama Industrial Development Training Institute

**Dr. Mark Heinrich**
- Chancellor
- Alabama Community College System

**Jeff Thompson**
- Executive Director
- Alabama Aerospace Industry Association

**Chester Vrocher**
- Acting Executive Director
- Alabama Technology Network

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