

Tour touts jobs

Written by

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12:40 AM, Mar. 24, 2011|

Jobs are key to Colorado's economic recovery, and they are coming from Fort Collins' Rocky Mountain Innosphere, Sen. Michael Bennet said Wednesday afternoon as he toured the building.

The tour was part of Bennet's Northern Colorado visit that included a stop in Greeley and his first visit to the Innosphere - formerly Rocky Mountain Innovation Initiative - since its grand opening last month.

Bennet said the work to support entrepreneurs and innovative new businesses are boosting Colorado's economy and creating good-paying jobs.

"I've seen these kinds of incubators actually around the country when I was working in the private sector and investing, but I really haven't seen one like this in Colorado," Bennet said. "What is becoming less unique, which is a good thing, is that you are starting to see these kinds of collaborations among our public universities, our state and federal government and the private sector, most importantly. And you are starting to see that in other places as well, but Fort Collins, Larimer County and Northern Colorado generally have really led on this, and I think we are starting to see the fruits of some of that."

Mark Forsyth, Innosphere chief executive officer, gave Bennet a tour of the new facility introducing him to innovative companies housed in the new building such as WeatherFlow, Wirsol, Spirae Inc. and Ridekick.

Marty Bell, director of research with WeatherFlow, a technology company dedicated to accurately monitoring, modeling and forecasting wind and weather conditions for specific applications, met and explained his company to Bennet.

Bell said it is great to have the chance to speak with leaders such as Bennet who can directly affect the direction clean energy is taking. Wirsol general manager Putnam Pierman showed their view of the building's solar panels mounted on the office's garage and asked for Bennet's support in terms of feed in tariffs, or a similar type of financial incentive in the United States for solar integration.

Bennet took such an interest in a new Fort Collins' startup company called Ridekick, which produces electric powered bike boosters, that he rode one around the parking lot.

"That is a perfect story," Bennet said of Ridekick. "That's someone's idea in Colorado leading to job creation and high salaries in Colorado."

Forsyth said the opening of the Innosphere at 320 E. Vine Drive in Fort Collins has exceeded all expectations and they are at 90 percent occupancy with the Northern Colorado French-American Chamber of Commerce and Colorado Water Innovation Cluster planning to locate there soon.

Bennet's visit is another example of the collective power Innosphere has in drawing businesses and political leaders together.

"It is great for entrepreneurs to see support for what they are doing," Forsyth said.

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For more information about Rocky Mountain Innosphere, visit www.rmi2.org.