

## Biden: Stimulus has saved thousands of Arizona jobs, will boost IT and high tech

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Federal stimulus money has saved more than 12,000 jobs in Arizona and laid the groundwork for a economic recovery built on information services and technology, Vice President Joe Biden said Nov. 16.

"We'll come out of this stronger than when we went in it," Biden said during a roundtable discussion at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. "But we can't have it built on a bubble. We can't have it built on a dot-com bubble. We can't have it built on a housing bubble."

Renewable energy, information technology, health care and education are all vital to the economy the administration hopes to help create, Biden said. He said it will require courage from businesses and entrepreneurs in order to create the robust industries the administration hopes to see.

"This country is all about taking a chance," Biden said, "and we've never missed when we've taken one on technology."

Biden said the stimulus funds assigned in Arizona so far have supported the high tech industries the administration wants to promote and will usher Arizona away from the housing and construction boom that, Biden pointed out, contributed to the recession.

The discussion, held to highlight a new taxiway made possible with the funds, included community members and representatives from businesses bolstered by the stimulus, as well as Democratic officials at the state, local and federal levels.

Jane Morris, assistant aviation director at Sky Harbor, said the taxiway project has already created 150 jobs and will create 300 by the time it's finished in February.

The vice president's visit comes at a time when Arizona's unemployment rate hovers just below 10 percent \_ up from 6 percent this time last year.

Sitting alongside Biden during the meeting, Jeanne Simons, a seventh- and eighth-grade English teacher at Gateway School in Phoenix, explained how her job was saved by stimulus funding after it was slated to be cut because of budget shortfalls.

Simon told Biden that her classes have about 30 students each but that if the planned cuts had been implemented, that would have changed.

"There would have been 40 to 50 kids in every class," Simon said.

Simon said those sorts of class sizes put added stress on teachers and hurt the academic potential of every student.

"I don't care how good the student is or how good a teacher you are, a class that size gets tough to manage," said Biden, whose wife is a teacher.

Donald Karner of Electric Transportation Engineering Corp. also sat with the vice president and spoke about federal stimulus funding that allowed his organization to move forward with planning and construction of electric vehicle fueling stations in Phoenix and Tucson.

Karner said his organization plans to start offering electric vehicle fueling by the end of summer 2010, in time for an anticipated increase in automakers' production of electric vehicles.

"We want to have the infrastructure there before the vehicles, so people can see it, get acquainted with it, give us time to study how people use the vehicles and fueling stations," Karner said.

State Rep. Steve Farley, a Tucson Democrat, said he was excited to hear the vice president address transportation projects and hopes to see the support of the administration turn into plans for new commuter rail lines in Arizona.

"We're actually applying for a grant to build a rail line between Tucson and Phoenix," Farley said. "We now have a rail planner working full-time at ADOT on this project."