

Danbury News-Times

October 2, 2008

Danbury firms win nearly \$15M in military contracts

By Dirk Perrefort
Staff Writer



DANBURY -- Nearly \$15 million in federal funding may be headed to Danbury through a military spending bill approved by Congress.

U.S. Sens. Chris Dodd and Joseph Lieberman announced the funding to the local companies -- for a variety of military projects -- was included in the Military Construction/Veterans Affairs Act that has passed both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

"This funding will make a major investment in the defense industry in Danbury," Dodd said. "I am pleased that America is investing in Connecticut's companies and relying on the workers in Danbury to provide our troops with the equipment they need to protect our nation."

Dodd said earlier this week that DRS Technologies is slated to receive \$7.6 million for a hybrid electric drive system for insertion into DDG 51 class destroyers and \$1.2 million for research on a Solid State DC Protection System.

Rich Goldberg, vice president of public affairs for the company, said a solid state protection system protects a ship's onboard circuitry in the event of a power failure.

"Any new contract is critical to the viability of our facility," Goldberg said.

He added the company's two facilities in Connecticut, in Danbury and Bridgeport, are key to its operations.

"Our goal is to continue the growth of our company and our presence in the state. Connecticut is a very important state for our company."

FuelCell Energy, which is headquartered in Danbury, is expected to receive \$3.5 million for a fuel cell to be used at the U.S. Navy submarine base in Groton, according to Dodd.

Dan Brdar, the chief executive officer of the company, said the fuel cell will allow submarines to run off clean energy while parked at the docks instead of using their diesel engines.

"This is an important first step in demonstrating how fuel cells can play a role in military installations," Brdar said.

He added that despite the recent turmoil in the economy, FuelCell Energy is experiencing an increase in revenues because of a "growing movement towards cleaner forms of energy generations. Our products are pollution-free and one of the most efficient ways to make energy."

Brdar said the company wants to continue its growth in the area and "create good paying jobs for Connecticut." The company employs about 540 people in the state.

Stephen Bull, president of the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce, said the federal funding shows that area companies can provide products for military and government applications as well as for the private market.

"It's that ability and the diversity of their employees that keeps those companies strong," he said. "It bodes extremely well for the region's economy. Our manufacturing is alive and well."

Mayor Mark Boughton said the success of local companies, including those who receive military contracts, is one of the reasons the city continues to have the lowest unemployment in the state.

"I am thankful for anything that Congress can do to help keep our people employed here in Danbury," Boughton said.

Contact Dirk Perrefort at dperrefort@newstimes.com or at (203) 731-3358