

N.J. must always compete for jobs

Let me begin by applauding the Christie administration and Honeywell for working together to ensure that the company will continue to call Morris County its corporate headquarters. Preserving 1,200 jobs and redeveloping the Honeywell campus will pay huge dividends for our

GUEST COMMENTARY



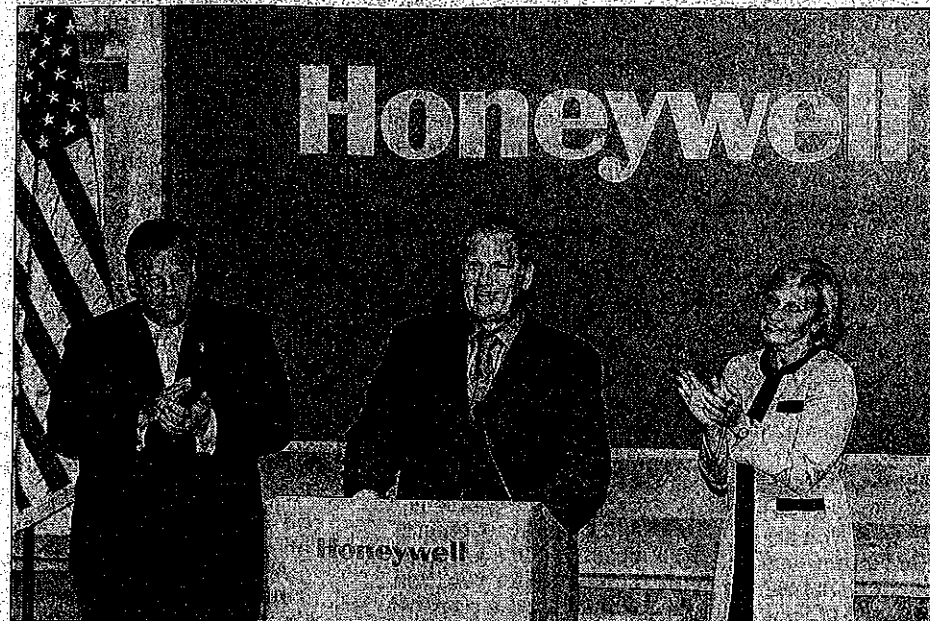
By Paul Boudreau

community and state in the years ahead.

It's important that we understand the aggressive actions states are taking to attract jobs from wherever they can find them. Companies in Morris County are being courted by other states with promises of generous incentive packages. I met with the president of a manufacturing company a few months ago. He employs 150 people and is new to Morris County. He was telling me about the offers he has been getting to move out of New Jersey, even after he told his pursuers that he just completed his move here from another location in our state.

The pitch — we will pay for all of your expenses and provide an incentive package that will lower your costs for many years to come.

Sometimes, this pitch includes bad-mouthing of our state. So for us, this is



STAFF PHOTO BY BOB KARP

Gov. Chris Christie, left, and Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno joined Honeywell Chairman and CEO Dave Cote to praise Honeywell's intention to redevelop its global headquarters, calling the company's decision an important economic gain for New Jersey and the region.

a 15-round fight, and we have to respond to the bell in every round if we want to keep the jobs we have and attract new ones. The new administration in Trenton is stepping up and reaching out to companies across the state. Here in Morris County, our Chamber of Commerce and the Morris County freeholders have worked together to promote job retention and economic development.

We have visited with numerous CEOs and senior executives of the biggest companies in the county. Those we met with were in two camps.

The first group were companies that have their corporate headquarters here in our community. The senior management team is here and they make the decisions about capital investment, hiring and strategic plans for the future. Their concerns center on the high cost of doing business in New Jer-

sey and the difficult regulatory climate. Some are uncertain about growing here in the future, especially if their project requires a permit from the Department of Environmental Protection or another state agency. This uncertainty around potential delays caused by government and the accompanying costs weigh heavily on decision makers.

The second group of companies has their corporate headquarters in other states. Their local management teams have many of the same concerns mentioned above but they have to deal with another important challenge. Their corporate leaders want to know why they should continue to support jobs in New Jersey, a location they view as a high-cost area. What about other states as an alternative? How about off-shore? These local managers are

engaged in a constant dialogue with their leaders, working to convince them that Morris County is the right place to support the goals of their larger enterprise.

Many years ago, a friend of mine who was a state senator in Ohio went on a crusade to convince state leaders in the Midwest that stealing jobs from one another was a futile exercise, just moving the checkers around on the board. He didn't have much success.

States and foreign governments are competing more than ever to win in the race for jobs, and we have to be nimble and responsive to the needs of our employers in New Jersey. The alternative is fewer jobs, less tax revenue for our communities and a stagnant economy for years to come.

Paul Boudreau is president of the Morris County Chamber of Commerce