

Granger prepares fight to defend local aerospace jobs

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BENBROOK — U.S. Rep. Kay Granger wants to keep budget cutting in Washington from cutting jobs in Fort Worth.

The veteran congresswoman echoed her commitment to local jobs Thursday in a visit to [AVX Aircraft Co.](#), a local aerospace startup. She called North Texas defense contractors “our lifeblood” for economic prosperity.

For the past year, congressional leaders have been immersed in discussions over cuts to defense programs, she said. But they are most often deterred from cuts that might affect their local community, she said.

“The bugaboo right now is sequestration,” said Granger, R-Fort Worth. “I’m saying, ‘Hey, when you’re talking about that cutting, you realize we’re losing American jobs as part of the situation.’”

North Texas employs more than 20,000 workers at its two largest aerospace companies, Bell Helicopter and Lockheed Martin Aeronautics. Many of those workers are involved in the \$400 billion F-35 Lightning II jet fighter program at Lockheed’s west-side facility. In June, Bell Helicopter received a \$6.5 billion contract for 99 additional V-22 Ospreys.

Granger is a strong advocate for both programs.

“I know that they [the F-35 and V-22 programs] will continue to be successful, and one of the things is the fact that they are very unique,” she said. “The F-35 ... there’s not a replacement for that.”

Granger’s visit to AVX, founded in 2005, was intended to emphasize her support for local aerospace innovation. The area is brimming with aerospace suppliers and related companies, she said.

AVX is vying for two Pentagon contracts that could increase its \$2 million annual revenue stream by millions, AVX spokesman Mike Cox said Thursday after Granger’s tour of the facility.

The company is doubling its office space and increasing its workforce to 45 employees from 30. AVX employs many former Bell Helicopter workers and engineers, Cox said.

“Because we are growing, that means jobs for people,” said Troy Gaffey, president and chief engineer at AVX. “We wanted [Granger] to know about our strategy.”

Granger is interested in learning about the location of subcontractors and suppliers that provide parts and services to AVX, she said. That way, she can use that knowledge for leverage in Washington.

"We have an aerospace caucus in the Congress and those are bipartisan," she said. "So we say, 'All right, we pulled in all of the members of Congress who have a piece of aerospace.' ...

"I'm saying, 'Look how many interests there are ... keeping American jobs.' That's just something we really fight for all the time," she said.

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