

Florida remains among biggest tech exporters with \$1B boost

For the second year in a row, Florida's technology exports have grown by more than \$1 billion, helping the state maintain its place behind California and Texas.

TechAmerica Foundation released its annual report Tuesday detailing national and state trends in the international trade of high-tech goods.

Florida exported more than \$14 billion in high-tech products overseas in 2008, more than 9 percent higher than the year before.

Brazil was the biggest recipient of Florida high-tech exports, buying \$2.2 billion worth in 2008. Venezuela bought \$1.6 billion last year while Paraguay imported \$1 billion worth.

Computers and peripheral equipment was the single largest tech sector in Florida with \$5 billion in exports last year.

"High-tech exports continue to be a boon to the Florida economy," said Todd Rader, chief executive officer of Avacent Consulting, in a release. "Many people — even within the state — would be surprised to learn that one quarter of all exports from the Sunshine State are high-tech products. We serve as a gateway for shipping technology products to Latin America."

Rader added that Florida should continue to press for free trade agreements with Columbia and Panama as Florida has "the most to gain from opening those markets."

The 9 percent export growth in Florida easily eclipsed that of the rest of the nation where high-tech goods sold \$223 billion overseas. That represented 17 percent of all U.S. exports to the world but was just 1 percent more than 2007.

At the same time, high-tech imports were down by less than 1 percent, totaling \$336 billion, resulting in a slight improvement in the trade deficit, which now stands at \$114 billion.

High-tech exports supported 1.16 million jobs in the United States in 2008, according to TechAmerica. In Florida, tech exports account for 92,200 jobs.

Florida's \$1 billion jump was one of the largest gains measured nationwide, joining Oregon, Utah, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania.

Although California continues to lead the nation with \$49.3 billion in exports, it was down 6 percent from the \$52.3 billion in posted in 2007.

Texas, which remains the nation's second largest tech exporter with \$39.8 billion, was mainly flat from the previous year. Massachusetts and New York posted minimal \$100 million gains year-over-year to finish behind Florida with \$9.4 billion and \$8.7 billion respectively, while Oregon's exports jumped more than 24 percent, or \$1.7 billion, to take over sixth in the nation with \$8.5 billion in exports.

When it comes to photonics exports, Florida is second in the nation with \$409 million, while it is third in communications equipment at \$3.7 billion.

TechAmerica Foundation educates industry executives, policymakers and opinion leaders on the promise of technological innovation to advance prosperity, security and general welfare. It was created in late 2008 with the merging of the American Electronics Association, or the AeA, and the Information Technology Association of America.