

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2007

"WICKED" Forecast: Pages 2, 64 22° | 19°

DOW INDUSTRIAL AVERAGE

23.15 12765.01
Up 0.2 percent

NASDAQ COMPOSITE

8.72 2497.10
Up 0.4 percent

STANDARD & POOR'S 500

1.51 1456.01
Up 0.1 percent

BUSINESS

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The state's exporting business is growing, jumping 17% in 2006

BY FRANCINE KNOWLES
Business Reporter

Exports have become bigger business in Illinois.

Companies here boosted their exports to more than \$42 billion last year — a 17.3 percent spike — according to new report, which also finds Illinois is now the fifth largest exporting state in the country, moving up from the No. 6 spot.

Illinois exports rose by \$6.2 billion in 2006 from 2005, state officials said Thursday in sharing data released from the World Institute for Strategic Economic Research. That was the largest dollar figure increase ever in a single year, Gov. Blagojevich's office said.

Joining Illinois among the top five states are Texas, the biggest exporting state, followed by California, New York and Washington.

The top countries for exports from Illinois companies are Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, Germany and China, according to the report.

The leading industry sec-

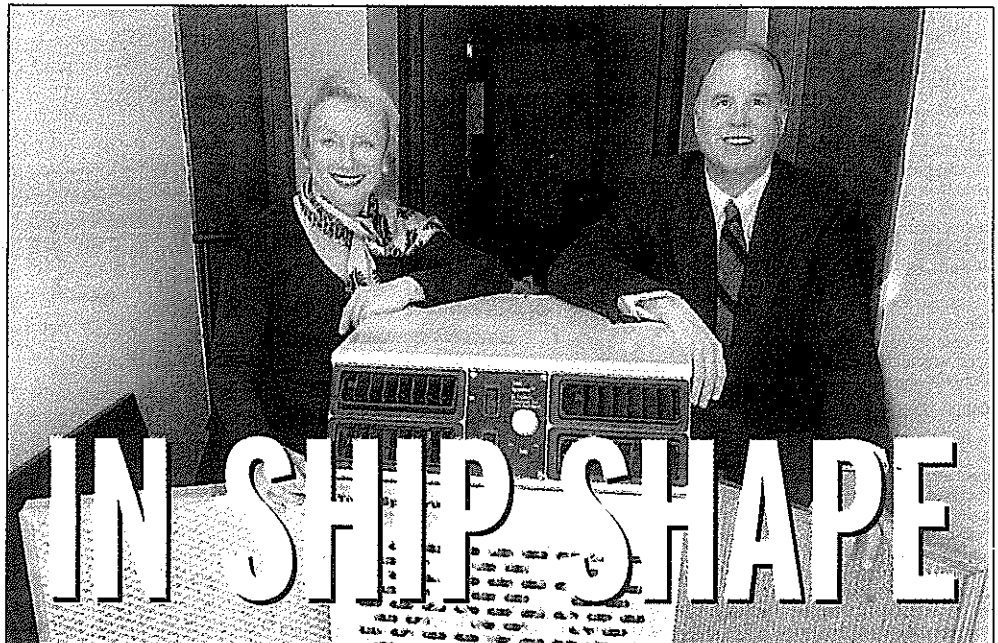
tors were machinery, chemicals, computer and electronic products, transportation equipment, electrical equipment and food and related products.

Since 2002, Illinois exports have grown by 64 percent or \$16.4 billion, state representatives said.

Blagojevich used the report to highlight the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Office of Trade and Investment, which helps companies target and expand their business in overseas markets.

Skokie-based ProMark Associates, a designer and manufacturer of air purification products for commercial and industrial markets, worked with the office's Latin America Trade Office in Mexico City, where it was able to secure a contract to supply refrigerator components. That contract has generated sales of more than \$200,000 over the past two years, said Bernice Valantinas, co-owner and vice president.

ProMark, which employs



Bernice Valantinas and Jeff Roseberry of the Skokie company ProMark Associates with one of their air purifiers Thursday. Sales to Chile, one of the countries with which they do business, might reach \$250,000 this year. —JOHN J. KIM/SUN-TIMES

eight people, also landed business with Mexico's state-owned refinery Pemex, where sales are expected to reach \$50,000 to \$100,000 this year, and participated in a 2005 trade mission to Santiago Chile in 2005. Sales to Chile this year are expected to reach roughly \$250,000.

Exports have helped put

the company on track to nearly double the roughly \$800,000 in revenues it generated last year, Valantinas said.

The state provided "invaluable" assistance in helping ProMark establish "relationships and making sure that we adhere to all the various rules that apply to international

trade," she said.

Woodridge-based E. Formella & Sons, a maker of Italian-style specialty condiments, received help from the state's trade office in identifying potential export markets, assessing the competition and in determining appropriate pricing for its exports, said Kathy Formella, secretary-

treasurer and co-owner. The third generation family-owned company, which employs 22 people, showcased its products at the Canadian Food and Beverage show in Toronto last year and has generated \$25,000 in sales to Canada since 2005, Formella said.

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