

Nevada missing an opportunity with exports

By Steve Green, Las Vegas Sun

For many Nevadans, “international trade” might mean heading to Walmart in their import cars to buy Chinese-made computers as well as imported desks and chairs to outfit their offices.

But trade is a two-way street, and economic development officials say Nevada companies sell billions of dollars of goods and services each year to customers in foreign nations.

Nevada exports of goods are dominated by gold sales, which in 2010 amounted to \$2.4 billion – 40 percent of the value of all state exports. Other big export categories for Nevada are copper (12 percent) and video game consoles, parts and accessories, including casino equipment (7.3 percent).

Through the first 11 months of 2011, total sales of the state’s exports of goods were about \$7 billion.

That’s a big number, no doubt, but there’s plenty of room for improvement. Utah, whose population of about 2.7 million people is comparable to Nevada’s, posted \$17.3 billion in sales in the same period.

Utah’s manufacturing base is far larger than Nevada’s, but insiders say Utah also has benefited from larger and more focused economic development efforts, including measures to boost overseas sales.

Utah’s commitment to promoting exports includes having not only just a state export director, but also global regional directors. Nevada, for its part, has just two international trade officials.

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