N. Carolina focus is on business, not politics, with China

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By May Zhou and Zhang Yuan in Charlotte, Nc |   
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Regardless of what is going on in Washington, business communities across North Carolina want to continue to grow their business relations with China.  
That's the sentiment discovered by a delegation from the Chinese Embassy in Washington and the China Council for Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) during a three-day visit to the state this week.  
In the state capital of Raleigh, the group met with officials from the Department of Commerce and members of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina. In Charlotte, the state's largest city, they met with Charlotte Regional Partnership, and held a trade discussion at Charlotte Chamber of Commerce.  
The delegation also visited some Chinese companies in the state and the state's celebrated Research Triangle.  
Both Carolinas' ties with China have been growing rapidly in recent years. The number of Chinese companies has grown from only a handful 10 years ago to more than 40 today. For both Carolinas, exports to China have increased 16-fold since 2000 and China is now their number one trade partner.  
Since 2013, Chinese investment in North Carolina has totaled $1.2 billion, creating more than 3,000 jobs.  
Angel Liu, executive director of global investment at the North Carolina Department of Commerce, said the state is balanced among its various sectors.  
"One Chinese company started in the furniture business and has now also entered into the smart home business with the Big Data and AI technologies available here. A Liaoning delegation recently came to focus on learning about senior living.  
"There are a lot of positives in the relationship to keep us going and overcome the road bumps we are facing right now," Liu said.  
Tian Deyou, minister-counselor with the Chinese Embassy in Washington, said that North Carolina is a good place for Chinese companies to invest and China now has more to offer to grow the relationship.  
"In the past 40 years, we reshaped our planning economy into a market economy. In 2001 China became a member of WTO which engaged China with the international business community. We learned three words from WTO: justice, fairness, transparency," Tian said.  
The result was rapid economic growth in China. Now there are 400 million in China's middle class with tremendous purchasing power and big demands for healthcare, education and international tourism. It's time US companies take advantage of that, according to Tian.  
"Unfortunately Washington is trying to do just the opposite," Tian said.  
Susan Fleetwood, executive director of economic development at the North Carolina Department of Commerce, said that the state is focused on fostering strong country-state relations.  
"Several countries look to establish strong country-state relationships to build ties. We are open to that and look for opportunities there. We have seen several groups interested in senior living and medical devices from China," she said.  
Ryan Nance, business development director at the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, said that regardless of what happens in Washington, most business people focus on international markets to be successful.  
"North Carolina opened an office in Hong Kong 25 years ago and trade with China means a lot to us. We are sending a trade group to Hong Kong for a natural product show in August, another to Shanghai," Nance said.

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