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state income tax credit. The "California Competes" program, administered by the state Office of Business and Economic Development, is handing out \$30 million to encourage companies to grow here and not leave the state. The pot will expand to \$150 million for the year that begins July 1.

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With less than a month to go, California businesses are eager to qualify for a new state income tax credit. The "California Competes" program, administered by the state Office of Business and Economic Development, is handing out \$30 million to encourage companies to grow here and not leave the state. The pot will expand to \$150 million for the year that begins July 1.

The agency, known as GO-Biz, said it got 396 applications, totaling \$559 million. A third came from small employers.

"GO-Biz received an overwhelmingly positive response," said Will Koch, who heads the program. "The demand for these tax credits demonstrates that there are a significant number of companies looking at expansion opportunities in California."

The criteria are based on applicants' new payroll spending and total new investment.

A list of award recommendations will be posted on GO-Biz's website). A selection committee will make the final decision at a June 19 meeting in Sacramento.

Business advocacy groups have long supported incentives. "Any time there's an opportunity for a tax credit, tax relief is a good thing for small business," said John Kabateck, California director of the National Federation of Independent Businesses.

No more flame retardants

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Some of the chemicals have been linked to cancer and birth defects.

“Where there is credible evidence that a material might result in harm to the environment or public health, we work to replace it with safer alternatives,” said Kathy Gerwig, Kaiser's environmental stewardship officer.

Kaiser said it's working with suppliers to come up with new furniture that both is slow to burn and chemical-free. The upgraded models should start arriving in hospitals and offices in early 2015.

Kaiser has proved itself to be “a leader in pushing the market toward safer standards,” said Michael Green, executive director of the Oakland-based Center for Environmental Health, which advocated for the new California flammability standards.

Down Mexico way

Mexico is California's biggest export market, and Gov. Jerry Brown plans to keep it that way. The governor will lead a delegation of government officials and business leaders on a trade mission there July 27-30.

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