

SOUTHERN INDIANA

We have a good, hard-working labor force in southern Indiana, and employers understand that. But the changes that are taking place across the country are taking place here too, and the education and skills required for good jobs in the future will only increase.

As I travel around the Ninth District, I meet many people who would like to work but cannot find jobs. At the same time, many employers tell me they have openings for good-paying jobs but cannot find people with the right skills. We are seeing a growing mismatch between the skills many people have and the skills employers need. This is a double tragedy. People are frustrated by their inability to find work, while firms are forced to put expansion plans on hold or to go elsewhere to expand. That means the growth and development of southern Indiana will be hurt and so will our living standards.

LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A few weeks ago, I held two roundtable discussions on the subject of economic development in southern Indiana, one in Batesville and one in Corydon. Both featured representatives from various sectors of the economy, including local businesses (both large and small), economic development officials, university researchers, school officials, and farmers.

The participants raised many important issues—including the quality of local infrastructure, the burden of government regulations, tax abatements to attract industry, the threat of competition from foreign producers, and the high cost of medical insurance.

But I was particularly impressed by the fact that virtually everyone brought up the need to improve the quality of education and access to skill training in southern Indiana. This one topic dominated, and many concerns were expressed. One participant discussed the difficulties many working parents face in contributing to their children's early education. Others were concerned about the quality of secondary school education in parts of southern Indiana and insufficient higher education and vocational training facilities. Many of the business representatives indicated that the growth of their firms is being restrained because trained, or even trainable, workers cannot be found to fill the job openings. One participant said that he had not hired anyone from the local high school in seven years.

Problems like these are not unique to southern Indiana. They are occurring all around the country. Nationwide we hear of companies having to screen thousands of applicants to find only a few who are qualified, and of basic math and English tests being routinely failed by applicants. Employers complain that many recently-hired workers do not show up ready to work, lack the capacity to learn, and frequently quit after a few weeks.

DEVELOPING A TOP QUALITY WORKFORCE

But we cannot use the widespread nature of this problem as an excuse for not tackling it vigorously here at home. It is clear that top priority needs to be given to developing a highly skilled and educated workforce in southern Indiana. This is especially crucial to the future prospects of today's young people, who will be working in an increasingly interconnected and competitive global economy. We need to focus our attention on the skills workers will need in the 21st century. They will need to know how to use computers to gather and process information. They will need to develop good interpersonal skills and be able to work in teams. They will need to understand how their own work fits into

the work around them, so they can contribute to solving problems.

But even more important, workers in southern Indiana will need to be proficient in the basic skills of reading, writing, and math. Mastering the skills for a specific job can no longer guarantee a lifetime of secure employment. Without these basic skills, the other skills will be of little value. The important thing is that the education system in southern Indiana must produce people who will be comfortable with a lifetime of learning. Workers will need to be able to master new skills and adjust to new technologies in an economy that will be characterized by constant and unexpected change.

COMBINED EFFORTS

The task of better preparing our workers for these challenges falls on many of us. Parents need to impress upon their young people the crucial importance of good education and work skills. Local schools are giving more attention to linking academic training with on-the-job work experience and technology training at local community colleges. The State of Indiana has several programs to help make the school-to-work transition easier. The private sector has played a big role in training and retraining the workforce, especially in larger businesses.

The federal government has a secondary, though important, role. Congress is currently reforming federal job training efforts—streamlining various programs and giving more flexibility to the states. At the same time, House Speaker Gingrich has proposed deep cuts in youth job training, school-to-work transition programs, and vocational and adult education. Certainly we need to balance the federal budget, but making deep cuts in programs that would help upgrade the work skills of our young people and brighten their economic future does not make a lot of sense to me, especially at a time when Speaker Gingrich wants to provide very expensive tax breaks to the wealthy.

One of the best investments we can make is in the skills of our workers. It means improved quality of life, higher productivity and living standards, stronger economic growth, better communities, and a brighter future for our young people. Helping to provide a better trained workforce just makes good sense.

THE FRONTIERSMAN: PIONEERS FOR PROGRESS

HON. JAMES A. BARCIA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 25, 1995

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, when any one of us faces a problem, the right answer is to work toward a solution. The Frontiers Club has been an organization that has done just that—work toward a solution—for many years. This Saturday, at the 40th annual banquet for the Frontiers Club, we will again celebrate another year's accomplishments as we prepare for yet another year of challenges.

The Frontiers Club lives on cooperation. It brings together civic leaders, business leaders, education leaders, and a host of others concerned about how to make lives in their communities better. It is built on the ideals of concentration of local resources on matters of local interest. The club parallels itself on the early pioneers who forged ahead to make new and vital discoveries with no convenient road maps, taking risks as they found them and

using their experiences to steel their later efforts. It is an image that should inspire all of us to do more because we have the opportunity to blaze new trails, not just follow after someone else.

Frontiers International began in 1936 as an organization that was all black, looking to help the black community. Over the years its membership has expanded, its focus has retained its core interest in the needs of the black community, and expanded to include other matters of similar importance.

The creed of the club sets an ideal for all us: to be committed; to know the club's agenda; to be prepared to change with changing conditions; to never be satisfied that matters are good enough; and that the key point of the organization is to help others who still need help. Every member is viewed as a potential leader, and can count on being called to be a leader. Every member is expected to meaningfully participate in planning club activities, club expansion, and club success.

The list of projects supported by the Saginaw Frontiers Club is most impressive. The United Negro College Fund, the Children's Christmas Party, the Vitiligo Foundation, Education Scholarship Sponsorship, First Ward Community Center, Opportunities industrialization Center of Metropolitan Saginaw, Saginaw County Senior Citizens' Picnic, Lake Huron Area Boy Scouts, Saginaw High School Attendance Lottery, Friendship Games, Trinity-St. John Community Center, Edith Baillie School Washington, DC, Field Trip, Saginaw Community Education Science Fair, the NAACP, Frontiers City-Wide Youth Tennis Tournaments, and the Ruben Daniels Educational Foundation are all projects that benefited from the wonderful, selfless activism of Saginaw Frontiers and its members.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that one passage of the induction ceremony for new members says it all. Members "are bound by duty, honor, and gratitude." What a wonderful, simple and provocative mandate. It is one which would serve all of us well to follow. At a time when we are expecting the Federal Government to do less, and for people to do more within their own communities, organizations like the Frontiers Club are vital and deserve to be heralded. I urge you, Mr. Speaker, and all of our colleagues to join me in thanking and congratulating the leadership and membership of the Frontiers Club for its efforts, and urge them to continue to lead by example.

WORLD POPULATION AWARENESS WEEK

HON. ELIZABETH FURSE

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 25, 1995

Ms. FURSE. Mr. Speaker, as of October 1995 the world population is estimated to be 5.7 billion with an annual growth of 88 million. World population is an issue that the citizens of the United States and people all over the world should be concerned with due to its wide spread environmental, social, economic, and political impacts.

The people of Oregon recognize the need for greater awareness of population levels and their implications. Mr. Speaker, I am inserting this statement from Governor John Kitzhaber