

Chamber goal: 20 million new jobs

By Lee Barnes

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A national Chamber of Commerce official said Tuesday that America needs 20 million new jobs over the next decade to restore the economy.

David Chavern, chief operating officer of the national chamber, outlined a five-point plan for getting the economy going again.

He spoke at a town meeting at the SALT block auditorium hosted by the local and national chambers.

The meeting was part of a national chamber campaign called American Free Enterprise.

Chavern said the keys to restoring the economy are:

â□ç A focus on infrastructure and investment.

â□ç Investment in energy, including nuclear power plants.

â□ç Doubling America's exports, with "fair, firm trade agreements."

â□ç "Good, smart" financial regulations.

â□ç Avoiding "stupidity," which includes higher taxes and poorly thought-out health-care reform.

In a speech mostly critical of the Obama administration, Chavern repeatedly said that "Business is the answer, and not the problem."

He said the Obama administration is moving to regulate carbon emissions "across the entire economy," a move he described as a "really, really bad idea."

Scott Millar, president of the Catawba County Economic Development Corp., said local businesses need to develop "bait" to attract new industries to the region. He added that the greater Hickory area should capitalize on "what we do effectively," which included, he said, making communications products.

Republican Congressman Patrick McHenry, who represents the 10th District, described the national economic stimulus plan as a "costly failure." He called on the Obama administration to "cease and desist" on new rules and regulations.

He also called for a balanced budget and trade policies to provide a "level playing field for American workers."