

U.S. Chamber shines positive light on free enterprise



Written by Michael Willard (O-N-E Publisher)

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As economic struggles continue nationwide and Catawba County's jobless figures are among highest in North Carolina, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is promoting a message aiming to generate 20 million jobs during the next 10 years.

That message?

"Business is the answer, not the problem," U.S. Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President David Chavern said during a Tuesday morning forum at the SALT Block in Hickory. "In polling among people, right now business isn't popular."

Meanwhile, as the business community battles a tarnished public image, Chavern said young people grow more skeptical of capitalism and the free enterprise system.

"The worst performing -ism is capitalism," he said. "We have done a poor job of educating young people about the role of free enterprise in this country."

To combat what Chavern said is a growing ignorance about free enterprise, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce launched a new campaign to encourage Americans to "dream big." That campaign, he said, aims to create 20 million new jobs through a variety of actions — from marketing and community engagement to legislative advocacy and research — dedicated to strengthening the nation's understanding of the free enterprise system.

"We are here to remind you that we live in the most economically free society in the world," Catawba County Chamber of Commerce President Danny Hearn said, adding that credit goes to hard-working Americans dedicated to improving their condition through the free enterprise system.

Helping others realize the role of free enterprise starts simply, Chavern said.

"We have to tell the story of why business is important," Chavern explaining the Chamber's message to young people is "Free enterprise is you. Your future is dependent upon free enterprise."

Meanwhile, the U.S. Chamber's commitment to endorsing business-friendly legislation, while opposing "stupid" policies will further strengthen the free enterprise message the organization is delivering.

"Who is going to provide jobs? It is not going to be government," he said, adding that the Chamber's mission to create 20 million new jobs will rely on "getting the economy rolling again."

That happens, he said, through infrastructure projects, energy production in the U.S., increased exports through fair trade agreements and "good, smart financial regulation."

"Let's get away from the stupidity" like higher taxes, card check legislation and poor health-care reform proposals, he said. "Business has to develop some certainty, and if they do, business will invest and get this economy moving again."

Much of the philosophy of Chavern and the U.S. Chamber is echoed by U.S. Rep. Patrick McHenry, who was also on the panel of speakers at the Tuesday event hosted by the Chamber of Commerce.

"We have to stop making the problem worse. We have to cease and desist on the rules that are having a negative impact," he said. "We have to stop regulators over-reach. We have to stop bad legislation. We have to say enough is enough."

"We have a community of people here that love free enterprise," McHenry continued. "The capacity to make change is in our hands."

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