

Roundtable spotlights “Campbellsville Comeback”

Rep. Lewis, colleagues, examine foreign investment boom in rural Kentucky

Campbellsville, KY - May 10, 2004 – The city of Campbellsville boasts a story of economic redevelopment that is indicative of the new “global world” in which Americans work and compete. The community has attracted thousands of new jobs, both from U.S. and foreign companies, since 1997.

U.S. Rep. Ron Lewis (KY-02), joined by colleagues U.S. Reps. Phil Crane (R-IL) and Wally Herger (R-CA), and numerous state and local community leaders participated in a roundtable discussion today to discuss how Campbellsville made its comeback and what can be learned from the community’s experience.

“Campbellsville’s economic recovery provides a remarkable example of how one community can be resourceful in the face of economic hard times and developing partnerships to elevate regional employment and quality of life,” said Lewis. “In 1997, when the Fruit of the Loom factory closed, hundreds of the local jobs went with it. A community effort to retrain the workforce and attract new and international employers brought big results.”

Seven years later, 13 new companies operate in Campbellsville and collectively employ 3,700 local men and women. The new employers include manufacturers, distributors like Amazon.com and international companies like Murakami, an automobile parts producer.

Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee Chairman Phil Crane (R-IL) and Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee Chairman Wally Herger (R-CA) attended the event to gather information useful to future proceedings of the full committee in the United States House of Representatives. The Committee has jurisdiction over trade and unemployment benefits legislation, and also plays a key role in charting the nation’s economic vitality through its control of personal and corporate tax policy.

“There has been lots of talk about how jobs are at risk, and how America supposedly can’t compete any more,” said Rep. Crane. “Yet Campbellsville shows how jobs and the economy can continue to grow even if one plant unfortunately shuts down.”

Noting resourcefulness of the Campbellsville community Rep. Herger added, “By pulling together workers, employers, educators, and government officials, Campbellsville demonstrated that new jobs can offer better wages and a better quality of life. But attracting those jobs requires hard work, including making sure our workers stay ahead of the curve in terms of training and commitment to producing a world-class product.”

The U.S. House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee will publicize the Campbellsville comeback as a model for how communities can pull together to grow the economy and jobs even if one employer shuts its doors. The Committee will apply these lessons in its future consideration of tax, trade, and employment policy under its jurisdiction.