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Democratic Congressional Candidate Eddie Sundquist Releases Jobs Plan to Revitalize the 23rd Congressional District

Introduction

As a native of Jamestown, I have seen the toll that a lack of quality jobs has brought to our district. Despite the promises of our current representative, the 23rd has not seen significant economic rejuvenation. We do not do enough to attract young adults that were raised here back into the district for their careers – and this must change. Our infrastructure is crumbling, employers continue to pack up and leave, and not enough high quality jobs are being brought into this district. To put it simply, we need a significant change in direction if we are going to bring economic prosperity back to the families of the New York 23rd Congressional District.

Funding an Economic Renewal Upstate New York and in Rural America

Rural areas and communities are struggling across the United States – not just here in upstate New York. What Washington politicians and special interests are doing just isn't working for our communities or our people. Massive federal investment is needed in infrastructure, education and skills training, and 21st century economic development and jobs programs like broadband build-out and green jobs.

Funding this is a priority. To raise funds for this, we would start with the following tax changes and guidelines:

1. Raise marginal tax rates for the wealthiest Americans and largest corporations and make permanent the current tax rates for middle and lower income Americans, which are currently scheduled to rise after 2025;
2. Tax dividends and capital gains as regular income;
3. Lower the estate tax exemption to \$5 million, the 2011 exemption level, and make sure all family farms are exempted from the tax;
4. Repeal the repatriation provision from the recent tax bill, which incentivizes companies to cut jobs in the US in favor of outsourcing labor;
5. Repeal all special tax breaks and corporate giveaways to the fossil fuel industry, which total tens of billions annually; and
6. Repeal the Tom Reed-Bob Corker Real Estate LLC kickback provision passed in the recent tax bill.

This massive reinvestment in smaller cities and towns in rural America, including much of upstate New York, should be funded by Congress and managed by expanded and reinvigorated regional commissions, such as the Appalachian Regional Commission and its 73 Local Development Districts,





which was created by President John F. Kennedy in 1963 “to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth” in a region that includes a majority of the 23rd Congressional District along with areas of 12 other states. Regional commissions with strong state and local governance and congressional oversight would be able to provide greater impact to our region and other regions that have unique challenges that may not be well understood in Washington.

Investing in our Infrastructure

To move our economy into the 21st century, we must first make our district into a hub of 21st century infrastructure. Infrastructure across the United States is crumbling due to lack of investment from the Federal government – and our district is no different. The American Society of Civil Engineer’s (ASCE) gave the USA’s infrastructure a D+ grade, including a D for our Roads, Dams, and Levees. The ASCE gave a D- grade to New York state on the condition of our roads, rating one-third of the road’s in the state either “poor” or “fair.” Poor roads also have an adverse effect in rural areas where fatalities are three times more likely. However, all of this provides an opportunity to create new jobs in construction while also allowing small businesses in our district to thrive.

- Creation of a National Infrastructure Reinvestment Bank

This would be a Federal Bank that would allow states, counties, and local municipalities to borrow federal funding at low interest rate loans for key infrastructure projects. This would allow our local communities to get the necessary funding they need for critical projects such as road repaving and bridge repair in a fiscally responsible way for both the Federal and local governments, helping spur investment and job opportunities. I would ensure that language would be written in to the bill to not only pay a prevailing wage to workers working on these projects but also give priority to hire local construction crews and trade union workers.

Rural Broadband is a key component of improving infrastructure in the 23rd. In 2016, only 55% of the population in rural areas have access to adequate broadband speeds, compared to 94% of urban population. This makes it unattractive for employers and businesses to move to the area and does not allow for the small businesses already here to grow and operate effectively. Modern technology allows for low cost credit card readers that can be used with a cell phone or tablet, but we need the necessary infrastructure to make this a reality.

- Follow “A Better Deal’s” Lead and Invest \$40 billion in Rural Broadband

\$40 billion would help to massively expand Rural Broadband across the nation. This will help bring our district up to speed to compete for large employers and allow our small businesses to thrive by being better able to connect with their customers.





Investing in our People

The single most important investment we can make is in the citizens of New York. We must invest in our people to help meet the demands of a 21st century economy. There are over 6 million unfilled jobs across the country. The main reason these jobs are going unfilled is that there are simply not enough qualified applicants to fill these positions. The Trump administration's budget proposes devastating cuts of up to 40% to federal re-training programs, cutting off a valuable resource that many could use to find new work in growing fields. Training takes many different forms; for example, a welder will need to be trained differently from a software programmer, but there is high demand for both positions in today's economy. Therefore, we can't take a "one size fits all approach" here, and there must be broad investments in numerous areas. In addition, I will make sure we continue to bring our students and children back to the district, by providing incentive programs that allow for maximum exposure.

- Free and Accessible Community College

Community College is an affordable and increasingly popular way for students just out of high school, non-traditional students, and those seeking retraining to seek a degree, add a certificate, or learn a new skill or trade. We should encourage Community College attendance for these reasons, and they can be engines for growth in our local economy. In Tennessee, the first state to offer completely free community college to all adults, there has been nearly 25% in community college enrollment, with a retention rate near double the national average. With the numerous quality Community Colleges in the 23rd and across the country, making them free and accessible would be a cost-effective way for those who are seeking to better their employment prospects to gain the necessary skills in today's economy.

- Free Public Four-Year Colleges for those who meet the Qualifications

In addition to free community college for anyone willing to attend, making four-year public college more affordable would help the large number of young people heading to college thrive after school. Students today are being saddled by massive debt to finance their education even in public, in-state colleges. For those that meet certain qualifications, including High School GPA and SAT/ACT scores requirements, public, in-state college would be free for any student to attend. With more than \$1.4 trillion worth of student debt now owed, we need to stop this crisis now and allow students to have gain a degree without compromising their financial future.

- Incentive Programs for Certain Professions

In the healthcare field, rural areas can often provide increased pay versus what cities while also providing student loan forgiveness benefits. I propose we create a similar federal program to encourage teachers to teach in rural schools. This would have a benefit of bringing high-paying jobs to spur the local economy as well as making sure we have many high-quality teachers in schools that often need it the most.





- Increase spending in proven programs for technical training for skilled jobs to high-tech manufacturing

It is necessary to provide retraining programs to those who have lost their jobs, which unfortunately includes much of our district. In the global economy, workers must be flexible and so must job retraining programs. I call for the expansion of funding under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. This federal program gives grants to states to pass down further to local boards and job training programs to help customize the job training process to the needs of local employers. We should model these programs like others that have been successful – such as WorkAdvance, which allows workers to earn a wage while training; I-Best, which has seen its graduates earn \$2700 more a year compared to those who haven't gone through skills training; and the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, which has had over 80% of graduates in the last year find jobs. This shows that there are numerous programs that can be successful if given the flexibility to operate in a way that will serve the local economy of the region best.

Investing in a 21st Century Industry

Increased investment in a 21st century industry would help make the 23rd District more competitive on a global scale. We should look no further than increased investment in renewable energy. One of the fastest growing industries in the country, solar jobs grew 16x faster than the rest of the U.S. economy in 2016. With renewable energy jobs about to eclipse 10 million jobs worldwide, there is a huge opportunity to invest in a booming sector of the economy. Not only will this create jobs, but it will help reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and help to counteract the harmful effects of climate change. By transitioning from a 20th century economy to more “green-collar” jobs, we in the 23rd can have an industry that can power our district for generations to come.

- Create a Relief Fund to Target the Hardest Hit parts of the Country by the Recession with Grants for Renewable Energy Developments

Areas such as the 23rd were the hardest hit by the recession, as well as manufactures leaving the area over the past decades. Creating a relief fund that would allow these regions of the country that need the most investment and get in on the ground floor of a booming industry. We should be making wind and solar parts in the 23rd, not shipping these parts over from China. This would allow areas that desperately need investment and jobs to have long-term, stable, and cutting-edge industries that are sure to attract new businesses and people and create new growth.

However, the Trump administration wants to slow down this growth in favor of further fossil fuel investment. GOP EPA Chief Scott Pruitt said last year that he would, “get away with” tax incentives for wind and solar projects. This has slowed down a number of future developments and clouded new projects, including a recent \$1 billion solar investment in Marion and Polk Counties in Oregon.





- Pass a 25-year Moratorium on Ending Tax Credits for Solar & Wind Developments to Provide Market Stability for These Investments

The uncertainty created by the Trump administration's unwillingness to promise to keep tax credits for renewable energy hurts job creation in a growing and potentially vital sector in our economy. We must protect this burgeoning industry from political interference.

A Vision for Tomorrow

Our district is struggling to adapt to the changing global economy, and our leaders in Washington are only compounding the problem. In order for the 23rd district to reach its full potential, we need to invest in infrastructure, industry, and most importantly, our people. I will fight for these policy objectives from the first day I am in Congress, because our economy simply isn't working for the people of the 23rd district. With these changes, we can get our communities back on track.

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