



Cardin kicks off 'Made in Maryland Tour' at Chesapeake College, discusses state of economy

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Cardin kicks off 'Made in Maryland Tour' at Chesapeake College, discusses state of economy By JORDAN SCHATZ Staff Writer @Jordan_BayTimesMy Eastern Shore, Maryland

WYE MILLS - United States Senator Ben Cardin, D-Md., took a trip to Queen Anne's County on Friday, April 26, to kick start his "Made in Maryland Tour," a cross-state journey to promote the importance of manufacturing in the economy.

The Maryland lawmaker began his tour with a stop at the Paul Reed Smith guitar factory in Stevensville but finished his day at Chesapeake College, where he participated in a roundtable discussion highlighting the economic future of the Eastern Shore.

"It's very exciting to see 'Made in Maryland,'" said Cardin. "I talk about making it in Maryland, which is where we want to have manufacturing, agriculture, high tech (and) bio tech - we want it all. We think the state is well poised to continue with its economic growth."

The roundtable discussion featured spokesmen from the three regional councils that represent the nine counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore. After a short presentation by the senator, talks quickly turned to the issues affecting the region.

Doris Mason, executive director of the Upper Shore Regional Council, Scott Warner, executive director of the Mid-Shore Regional Council, and Brad Bellacicco, deputy transit director for the Tri-County Lower Shore, each provided updates from their respective jurisdictions before asking questions related to matters affecting the entire Eastern Shore.

Issues brought to the senator's attention included the impact of national budget cuts, known as sequestration, the wide-spread lack of high speed Internet in rural parts of the Shore and the ill-effects of pollution runoff into the Chesapeake Bay from states north of Maryland. Lack of funds for local colleges and the unemployment rate in the region were also discussed.

Cardin weighed in on each topic and assured those present each matter would be brought back with him to Washington.

"We've been through tough periods before and we have the best system in the world," Cardin said. "The earlier we are alerted to a problem the more efficient we can be in (solving) the problem."

The senator, who serves on the Finance, Foreign Relations and Small Business and Entrepreneurship committees, continually returned to the current state of the Maryland economy, stressing the necessity for more jobs in the state and more business-friendly legislation from Capitol Hill.

"I know the importance of small businesses to our economy," Cardin said.

A portion of the tour featured a look at the manufacturing numbers for Maryland over the last decade. The state accounted for about \$16.7 billion in manufacturing in 2009, a rise of nearly \$3 billion since 2000. More than 114,000 Marylanders are employed in manufacturing, and since 2003, manufacturing exports in the state have risen nearly three times as fast as Maryland's overall economy.

"I love the Eastern Shore (and) I think it has so many advantages," Cardin said. "I want to preserve its unique way of life but also provide it an economic future so that families stay on the Eastern Shore and know that the future is on the Shore.

"That's why we work so hard on the rural issues, on the agricultural issues, on the economic issues (and) all of the above. It's that important."