

Businesses cite job barriers

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Local business and university leaders told U.S. Rep. Tom Reed on Monday that burdensome regulations, high energy costs and **taxes** and uncertainty about health reform are inhibiting job growth.

Reed, R-Corning, is holding a series of meetings around the 29th Congressional District, which includes parts of Monroe and Ontario counties, as federal lawmakers soon will consider President Barack Obama's proposed \$447 billion American Jobs Act.

The legislation, sent to the House of Representatives on Monday, proposes a package of spending and **business** incentives along with targeted tax cuts.

Reed, who was elected last year to his first term, said he opposes Obama's proposal to cut the payroll tax for employers and employees, saying reductions could hurt entitlement programs.

"I favor keeping these taxes where they are," Reed said at the meeting at High Tech Rochester in Henrietta. "More cuts could threaten Social Security and Medicare." Both programs are funded in part through payroll taxes.

The Obama administration insists — and many experts agree — that the proposal

would have no impact on the program's **financial** soundness.

Reed said he favors a simplified tax code and said he would look askance at tax breaks for oil companies and for such perks as private jets.

"There can be no winners and losers in this," he said. "I was glad to hear the president say that Medicare needs to be reformed. The goal has to be to identify a problem and craft a solution."

Local representatives of manufacturing, telecommunications, banking, real estate and higher education met with Reed to share their thoughts about obstacles to business and job growth.

Most cited regulations in areas such as the environment, health care, immigration and energy. They are rules, they said, that tie up companies needlessly, keep good ideas out of the pipeline and drain financial resources.

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"We used to be a nation of can-do," said Peter Schott, president of XLI Corp., a Rochester manufacturing company. "Now it's we can't do this or that here, because we don't want wind turbines near us, or a power plant there."

Some of the regulations that afflict local businesses come out of state agencies, not federal ones. But for businesses and the public, the difference between state and federal on this score isn't as important as the cumulative effect.

"The key is to resolve this so that businesses are not facing multiple obstacles," said Christopher Wiest, a Rochester Business Alliance vice president.

Sandy Parker, CEO of the alliance, said the meeting helped crystallize and define the many issues that affect business growth locally and nationwide.

"I've asked my staff to identify the specific regulations that deter businesses so we can work on changing them," Parker said.