

# Hodes vows to level playing field on trade pacts

Union Leader 12/15/09

◆ **Bill co-sponsor:**  
As manufacturing jobs disappear, congressman calls for new approach.

By **PAULA TRACY**  
New Hampshire Union Leader

**MANCHESTER** — With New Hampshire's manufacturing economy faltering, U.S. Rep. Paul Hodes announced yesterday he is co-sponsor of a bill in Congress to address the trade imbalance.

Meeting with out-of-state manufacturing workers and labor leaders at the Airport Diner in Manchester yesterday morning, Hodes (D-NH) said the TRADE Act will set tough new standards for trade agreements.

"It's a jobs bill," he said, "We need to recognize we are in a huge transition."

Hodes said tight credit, out-of-control health care costs and a need to create a new energy economy are all part of the issue.

"We're not giving up," he said.

Marlie Merrill was there to hear what the congressman had to say. Merrill, a machinist, is on furlough from Kingsbury Corporation in Keene, which used to have 1,200 manufacturing jobs and now has 90. He is a member of the United Auto Workers Local 2232.

He said his employers cannot get loans because they do not have contracts and they cannot get contracts without loans.

"It's a vicious cycle," Hodes



BOB LAPREE/UNION LEADER

Marlie Merrill, left, a machinist at Kingsbury Corp. in Keene, tells 2nd Dist. Congressman Paul Hodes his work hours have been cut and his company is struggling as a result of the recession. Hodes met yesterday with Merrill and labor and social activists, including Don Boehner and Gail Kinney from the United Auto Workers union, in Manchester to listen to their comments on jobs and to explain his sponsorship of a bill to reduce the impact of foreign trade on job loss in the U.S.

said. "We need to take a new approach of rewarding those for creating jobs in America."

The TRADE Act sets tough new standards for trade agreements to make sure that they benefit American workers and businesses, Hodes said. The proposal also calls for a detailed review of every international trade agreement, and their impact on American workers and

families.

Merrill said he knows of two fellow employees who have lost their jobs.

He has been struggling to pay health care costs while out on furlough.

"That's why health care reform is critical," Hodes said. "It needs to be affordable, portable."

Gail Kinney of Canaan was

at the roundtable and listened. She is a member of UAW Local 1981 and goes around the state helping those dealing with unemployment. While the watch word is "re-training," she said, "at this point the question is training for what? There is a sense of quiet desperation."

NH AFL-CIO President Mark McKenzie said in 35 years, he has seen a tremendous

change.

In Manchester alone, he said you could walk both sides of the Merrimack River and see thousands working in shoe and sweater manufacturing. Now, those jobs — which paid enough to keep people buying cars and houses — are gone, altered by trade agreements such as NAFTA.

Hodes said the TRADE act

calls for a thorough economic, environmental, and security-focused review of all existing major trade agreements, to be conducted by the Government Accountability Office. The plan would also set standards in place for all future trade agreements, including environmental, labor, and product safety standards. If GAO reviews reveal a gap between existing trade agreements and the new rules this proposal would set in place, the President would be required to submit plans to renegotiate any trade agreement that does not meet the new standards.

Ryan Williams of the New Hampshire Republican State Committee listened in as well. He said Hodes is really part of the problem and his "reckless spending," is something which will only get the nation into further debt.

He said that Democrats have spent \$787 billion on a jobs creation plan that has not materialized and have "put us on the road to fiscal ruin ... we simply can't afford these reckless policies."

The bill, HR 3012, was introduced in June by U.S. Rep Michael Michaud, a Maine Democrat. It has 31 co-sponsors, including Hodes.

There is related legislation on the Senate side.

Williams said he considered yesterday's announcement as political posturing; Hodes is running for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Judd Gregg.

"He has not lived within his means. The voters should cut up his credit card," Williams said.