TITLE

May 2016

Last week, I had the opportunity to visit Pittsburgh Congressman, Rep. Mike Doyle in Washington, DC to encourage him to take an interest (and action) in several areas that are critically important to both myself and our entire local economy. First, I urged Rep. Doyle to join the recently formed bipartisan Congressional Cooperative Business Caucus formed by Reps. Ed Royce (R-CA) and Mark Pocan (D-WI). Second, I encouraged him to take a closer look at cooperative businesses in the Pittsburgh area to better understand the significant contributions cooperatives make to the local and state economy, and the impact they have throughout community.

Throughout its history, the cooperative movement has empowered the powerless by creating platforms on which underserved communities stood and worked together to rise up and provide for themselves. Today, as the National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International celebrates 100 years of co-ops that build a better world, cooperation remains a powerful resource, but does not yet have a seat at the table when we talk about ways to tackle our country’s many social and economic barriers. The cooperative movement evolves and adapts with every new socioeconomic challenge our country faces and it’s time we start taking advantage of it.

Co-ops in Pennsylvania are working to build a better world by building community wealth, protecting the environment, reducing poverty and strengthening our local economy. The East End Food Co-op is Pittsburgh’s only member-owned natural and organic foods grocery store, striving to bring healthy food to the community, build consumer ownership and participation in the city and region. East End is just one of the 809 cooperatives that have created 14,500 jobs across the state and generate $50 billion in revenue. There is a good reason for the enduring success of co-ops in Pittsburgh and across the country; people trust cooperatives.

A recent survey conducted by the National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International found that Americans believe strongly that co-ops have the best interest of their consumers in mind, that co-ops offer fair, competitive prices on high-quality goods and services and that they are committed members of their respective communities. Each of these characteristics are integral to understanding why co-ops have earned the trust of American consumers.

Congress’ role in all of this is simple. Recognize the economic stability co-ops can bring to your communities. Understand the business of co-ops and how proposed legislation can positively or negatively impact their potential for success. Co-ops are slowly gaining a voice at the federal level, and we know that movements gain strength in numbers. The Congressional Cooperative Business Caucus presents a great opportunity for legislators to gain an understanding of the monumental impact co-ops already have in their districts.

The evidence is clear. Co-ops are no longer an emerging trend in today’s economy. We have transcended the successes of traditional business models and we’re having a lasting impact on the communities we serve. It’s time that our very own Rep. Doyle recognizes the impact co-ops are having here in Pittsburgh and cement his commitment to economic prosperity in our district by becoming a cooperating member of the Congressional Cooperative Business Caucus.

NAME

TITLE/BUSINESS

LOCATION