Making a difference in the economy

Federal resources can and do make a difference in the daily lives of millions of struggling Americans. I'm happy to say that the USDA Food and Nutrition Service provides 50 percent of the cost to run an excellent new outreach service by food banks throughout the state of Ohio.

In Cleveland, this federal grant provides funding for the Cleveland Foodbank Help Center. The Foodbank recently hired 4 new full time staff dedicated to answering the phones, completing applications, and helping community members access a variety of programs from SNAP (formerly food stamps) to heating and cash assistance.

They are able to direct anyone in the Foodbank's six county (Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga, Ashtabula, Richland, and Ashland) service territory to a pantry, hot meal, or produce distribution site that is closest to their home, through a quick phone call. Their services include completing applications OVER THE PHONE for benefits including food assistance (food stamps), cash assistance (welfare), medical, utility, and other programs available through the Ohio Benefit Bank.

Office hours are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please share these phone

numbers with anyone you think could benefit from this program at the Cleveland Foodbank: Help Center Number (216) 738-2067 or toll free at (855)738-2067.

While our economy shows signs of improving in some areas, too many families and seniors continue to face poverty and that's why I'm passionate about looking out for our most vulnerable citizens through vital programs such as SNAP and aid to emergency food providers. The Cleveland Foodbank went from 29 million meals in fiscal year 2011 to 33 million meals in fiscal year 2012.

RECENT VOTES

H.R. 6429 STEM Visa Bill - Voted NO. On the surface, the bill appears to give highly skilled immigrants educated in the United States a pathway to remain in the country and continue to contribute their expertise in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields. Peel back the layers and it becomes readily apparent this bill is a divisive measure that gives on one hand and takes away with the other. This bill, created by House Republicans, undermines the goal of comprehensive immigration reform. It expressly allows for visas to students enrolled in for-profit and online programs in the U.S., whether or not they reflect scientific excellence. More importantly, it eliminates the Diversity Visa program which opened immigration by lottery to individuals from low-immigration countries around the globe. This shuts the door primarily to people from African countries and for people from Eastern European nations seeking to reunite with family in the U.S. The Republican legislation also lacks sufficient wage protections, allowing employers to pay foreign STEM workers less than the average wage in their occupations. I support fair and just immigration reform. This bill not only fails to move us closer to that goal, it takes us in the opposite direction.

RECENT GRANTS

Congratulations to CityMusic Cleveland, which was recently awarded a $10,000 Challenge America Fast-Track grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The goal of this federal grant program is to support primarily small and mid-sized organizations for projects that extend the reach of the arts to underserved populations. In its ninth season, CityMusic Cleveland has blossomed into one of the finest professional chamber orchestras in the nation. Their free concerts are so well received that they attract visitors from other states. I'm proud to know many of their performances are held in my district, from Cleveland Heights to the Slavic Village and Detroit Shoreway neighborhoods of Cleveland.