

SMC's December 13th Government Relations Meeting with Congressman Jason Altmire

By Eileen Anderson, SMC Government Relations manager



It was like a repeat performance of last November when Rep. Altmire came and spoke to members on a Monday morning. This year SMC'ers did not let the snowy chilly weather stop them. They turned out in droves to hear the Congressman speak and then sent many important questions his way.

President Tom Henschke opened the meeting and pushed hard for extension of the Bush tax cuts and repeal of the 1099 reporting provision in the new health care law. Altmire expressed his support for the

tax deal framed by the administration and his belief the bill would pass by the end of the year. He voted for repeal of the 1099 provision although it did not pass the House and encouraged members to give him real world examples of how the 1099 provision would impact their businesses to enable him to advocate on their behalf.

When questioned about the deficit and government spending Altmire said the November election was all about spending and expressed his belief the incoming congress would be dedicated to bringing down the deficit. Altmire pointed out that many difficult decisions will have to be made and all items will be on the table for reductions. He was encouraged that Congress is finally having a discussion about spending and stated he supports across the board cuts in all non-security areas.

When questioned about the new health care law, Altmire, who voted against bill, said he would not defend the bill. The view taken is that the problem is solved but he noted nothing in the bill addresses costs. Instead of addressing costs the bill expanded coverage to 30 million uninsured by creating a pool of money raised from tax increases and Medicare cuts.

He stated that in near term, a goal would be to make the delivery system more efficient by paying for quality not quantity. The new Congress will be discussing changes to the law but he thought it would be difficult to repeal the entire bill and also hard to repeal the parts of it which are already implemented.

One of his most interesting statements was about gerrymandering reform. If he was asked what he would do to make things better in Washington, D.C he said he would change the way districts are drawn. He suggested more districts should be like his in which there is almost an even split between democratic and republican voter registration. The country is centrist and most people are in middle but the people elected are on the extremes and they control the debate in Congress.