

PETERBOROUGH

Kuster touts family friendly legislation at roundtable

Proposals include increase in minimum wage

By Ashley Saarl

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PETERBOROUGH — It's tough to make a living, and having a family shouldn't make it harder.

U.S. Congresswoman Ann McLane Kuster was in Peterborough at the Mariposa Museum on Tuesday to attend a roundtable of business, childcare and healthcare representatives to discuss several federal law proposals aimed to improve job quality and pay, and improve the working environment for families.

Among Kuster's proposals was support for an increase in the federal minimum wage, raising the minimum wage to \$12 per hour over a four-year period.

Other bills address benefits, including health care, implementing mandates for benefits like sick days or family and medical leave, and a bill that would allow students to refinance loans at a lower rate and create tax credits for companies that partner with community colleges to create skill-training programs.

While reception from locals to these concepts was positive, some questioned their viability in the political arena.

While wearing his "skeptical hat," Phil Wyzik of Monadnock Family Resources questioned whether these bills would gain support across party lines, or if they would be "torpedoed" by partisanship. Kuster admitted that some of them would be a hard sell — particularly the attempt to increase the minimum wage. Other issues affect people across party lines and are more open to negotiation, such as implementing family and sick leave.

"These are equal opportunity issues, they don't differentiate between the 'R's and the 'D's,'" said Kuster. "This is definitely an ambitious agenda, but it's worth putting out there and talking about."

Emily Hall-Warren, a member of the panel, said that of the proposed bills, she agreed that it was a provision for family or medical leave that she would be most excited to see. There are some situations, Hall-Warren pointed out, where a family living paycheck to paycheck would not be able to survive being out of work for any amount of time, whether it be for an illness or for family needs, without some form of compensation.



Staff photo by Ashley Saarl

Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Sean Ryan speaks with Congresswoman Annie Kuster as Mariposa Museum Executive Director Karla Hostetler listens during an economic roundtable Tuesday.