

Franklin Center For Global Policy Exchange talks with Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs-Jones Talks about Wealth-Building and Economic Challenges During Policy Panel Session

CAPITOL HILL, June 5, 2008 – Fresh off the fast-paced Hillary Clinton for President campaign trail, Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH) returned to Washington and was upbeat about the potential for real change on issues ranging from housing to pensions to health care. The Congresswoman shared her thoughts with the Franklin Center just days after Senator Clinton suspended her campaign and announced that she would soon endorse Senator Barack Obama as the Democratic Party's nominee for President of the United States.

All About Wealth Building

Rep. Tubbs Jones began her remarks by recalling what drew her to public service in the first place. Above all, it was to help the people of her community live better, more prosperous lives. "It's all about wealth building for me," she said, referring to her efforts to help people get housing and jobs and to help small businesses thrive so more jobs could be created. Her first Committee assignment was on the Small Business Committee, where she gained an appreciation for the role that smaller employers play in the local and national economies.

But she added that big business also plays an important role in providing jobs, pensions and the tax base necessary for public education and other local government services. While noting that she enjoyed and was proud of her 100% labor voting record, she said that "I'm a big business fan," and that she had worked her entire career to bring labor and management together to keep businesses in her district. The 11th District of Ohio, comprising several neighborhoods in and around Cleveland, has been especially hard hit by the tough economic times.

Hoping to deliver even more for her constituents, the Congresswoman next trained her sights on the influential and prestigious House Ways and Means Committee, which oversees tax policy, health care, Social Security, trade, and human resources issues.

A Seat on the Ways and Means Committee

After working hard and securing a coveted seat on the Committee, Rep. Tubbs Jones saw limitless opportunity to make progress on a variety of fronts. At one of her first committee hearings, she got a clearer understanding how the federal tax system encourages or discourages certain kinds of behavior. She learned from her colleagues how to employ her Committee position to aid her district and her constituents as best she could. One area in particular was retirement policy.

"Pensions are a very big deal for me," said the Representative. She argued that when people work hard and build a long-term relationship with a company, they should be able to retire with a decent pension. Her goal in the process was finding how to help both

workers and employers by putting in place rules which promote good pension plans which are protected. She said that annuities were a very important tool to seniors in that they provide a steady stream of income.

2009: The Year of Health Care

Turning then to another major topic, the Congresswoman said that 2009 will be the year that the US government enacts major reforms to America's health care system. She cautioned however, that Congress recognizes that the largest providers of health care in the country are employers, and that government must be careful when considering solutions to problems in the system. In particular, she thought it would be a very bad idea to start taxing employers who provide health care, saying that would be a step in the wrong direction.

High Food Costs and a Summer Jobs Program

In response to a question, Congresswoman Tubbs Jones said that the economic situation is far more challenging in her district than in other areas of the country. She said that the \$600 economic stimulus rebate checks that were going out would help but that it still might not be enough: "Some people may not have enough money to buy food."

Her view was that more economic stimulus was needed, and she highlighted a summer jobs program that she was working to include in a supplemental appropriations package that was under consideration in the House of Representatives.

An Open Door Policy

In closing, Mrs. Tubbs Jones said she was very much enjoying her Committee work and her Congressional service, and that she has an "open door policy." She said she welcomes ideas to help her constituents, but demands that anyone who meets with her be up front and honest about both the costs and benefits of a certain proposal. Her approach of bringing people together to solve tough problems has served her well and will continue to be her guiding principle as she continues her impressive service in the House of Representatives.