

COLUMBUS, IN - Congressman Mike Pence participated in the National Association of Manufacturer's "Congressional Dialogue" today with members in Columbus:



[Pence: Economy remains vital issue](#)

BY KIRK JOHANNESEN

Although Congress has spent a lot of time debating health care reform, the economy remains the most important issue in the country, said U.S. Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind.

The Columbus native shared that opinion Tuesday during a meeting with members of the National Association of Manufacturers at Columbus Learning Center.

The House Democrats' health care reform bill passed by five votes Saturday, but statements from Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., make it uncertain if the Senate's health care bill will receive a vote soon.

"I hope there is growing pressure to set aside these new government programs in exchange for initiatives to create jobs," Pence said.

He cited the country's 10.2 percent unemployment rate in October as the reason why the economy should be the primary focus.

Pence said exit polls in last Tuesday's elections for governor in New Jersey and Virginia, won by Republicans, indicated the economy and government spending were voters' top two concerns.

Pence also said statements by U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., urging Senate Democrats to drop the health care reform bill and focus on the economy lend credibility to the idea.

"What I'm trying to get House Republicans to do is to pivot to the economy," said Pence, the third-ranking Republican in the House.

Rick Schostek, vice president of Greensburg-based Honda Manufacturing of Indiana, said Honda is bracing for another difficult year and asked Pence what is feasible to get the economy jumpstarted.

Pence noted that studies are showing the Cash for Clunkers program had positive impact, but he said he opposes the federal government supporting one industry over others.

He said he would prefer to see tax cuts that give people extra money they could spend on whatever they preferred.

"What if everyone had \$3,000 this year they did not expect?" Pence said.

He suggested allowing tax cuts passed during President George W. Bush's administration, which are set to expire soon, to be extended as another way of helping the economy.