

Congressman Pence spoke with the Columbus Rotary, giving an update on issues before Congress and hearing some of their concerns with what is going on in Washington:



[Pence on 'listening' tour Economy, health care, energy tops on constituents' minds](#)

BY KIRK JOHANNESSEN

U.S. Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., is using Congress' five-week break to tour the 6th District, speak with and listen to constituents and take an "extended dose of Hoosier common sense to Washington."

The economy is the most important thing on Hoosiers' minds, but health care and energy are too, said Pence, who spoke Monday at Columbus Rotary Club and with The Republic' editorial board.

Pence said that as a conservative Republican with strong support in his district he would be surprised if he heard many voters supporting President Obama's health care, energy or "cash for clunkers" plans.

Clunkers 'bad deal'

The "cash for clunkers" program is "a good deal for car buyers but a bad deal for taxpayers," Pence said.

He doesn't fault people for taking advantage of the program, but opposes it because it uses taxpayer money to help just one industry (automotive) and restricts how people can use the rebate system.

The program's goal is to remove old cars with poor gas mileage and higher emissions from the road, and give car buyers incentives to purchase new cars with better gas mileage and lower emissions.

Pence thinks it would make more sense to offer the equivalent of the rebate in a tax cut and let people decide how best to spend that money, possibly boosting other struggling industries.

"All the gimmicky handouts are no substitute for broadbased tax relief," Pence said.

Some car dealers who sell used cars also have expressed displeasure with the "cash for clunkers" program, Pence said, because it involves only trading in for a new car.

The House of Representatives voted Friday to approve an additional \$2 billion to fund "cash for clunkers" after so many car buyers participated that the deals exhausted the program's initial \$1 billion funding.

The Senate still must approve the additional funding, though.

Health plan needs fix

Congress' five-week break will serve as a "clarifying time" for members as they hear from constituents, Pence said.

He said many people have expressed to him concerns that a government-run health insurance program would cause their employers to drop their health care plans.

Pence said he thinks Americans, when meeting with their elected representatives, will express support of health care reform but opposition to government expansion.

Health care can be improved without government expansion through medical savings accounts, high deductible policies for businesses and the pooling of large numbers of workers nationwide from a particular industry to secure lower premiums, Pence said.