

REP. ADAM KINZINGER

Kinzinger feels failed health plan misunderstood



U.S. Rep. Adam Kinzinger, left, speaks with Adam Dontz, CEO of the Greater Livingston Economic Development Council ahead of meeting at the Eagle Performing Arts Wednesday afternoon.

PAUL WESTERMEYER/DAILY LEADER

By Paul Westermeyer
Staff Reporter

Ahead of a closed roundtable meeting with members of the Greater Livingston Economic Development Council, U.S. Rep. Adam Kinzinger spoke briefly to the media Wednesday afternoon about his current focus on job growth and what's to come for Livingston County.

Kinzinger, R-Channahon, also offered thoughts about recent developments on the national level, including the failed Republican repeal-and-replace Obamacare effort, as well as the precarious situation America now finds itself regarding North Korea.

Ahead of the meeting with the community's chief economic growth organization, the representative said he'd recently seen positive signs concerning

both the manufacturing front and the standard of living of the middle class.

"We've seen some good signs in manufacturing and job growth, and we're starting to see middle class wages tick up a bit, and manufacturing is going to be a big key to that," he said.

While he noted that economic distress was prevalent across the state, Kinzinger thought that the cooperation of the public and private sectors of Livingston County had helped alleviate the worst of it.

"Everybody's struggling, and it's something we need to get a better handle on," he said. "Part of the blame, I think, has to go to Springfield. We're not just losing jobs to India, we're losing them to Indiana, and that isn't because the weather's nice or they have more mountains over there.

"Livingston County's been doing great compared to other areas: for instance, tourism in Pontiac really exploding in a big way, and that's a good thing. But we could always be doing better. I think a lot of the issue is a skills gap, of jobs that are available versus what people are trained for. One of the rules of the federal government is to see trends in the future, and highlight those trends."

Staying on the federal level, Kinzinger lamented the failure of the GOP to repeal and replace Obamacare, which has been a large part of the Republican platform since the Affordable Care Act was first signed into law in 2010. He said that the various replacement plants, which received negative press due to the Congressional Budget Office reports that mil-

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lions would lose coverage, were “misunderstood.”

“I thought our bill (the American Health Care Act) was very misunderstood, I thought it was good,” he said. “No bill’s perfect, you’ll never find a perfect bill, but it failed. We passed it out of the House (of Representatives) and the Senate was unable to come together on a plan.”

While admitting that the CBO scores were a concern, Kinzinger said that “the system is failing right in front of our eyes; people are paying huge deductibles and premiums,

and we’ve got to figure out how to make it better.”

In recent days, bellicose rhetoric from President Donald Trump toward North Korea, saying the country would face “fire and fury” and “power the likes of which this world has never seen before,” and subsequent threats made by supreme leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un, has had critics worried of a full-scale conflict with the potential of nuclear weapons involvement. However, Kinzinger thought that the reaction was largely overblown.

“I wish (Trump) hadn’t said it like that, but I think there’s much ado that’s been made about it,” he said. “The reality is that that’s how North

Korea talks all the time and the other reality is that we’ve been using diplomatic talk for 20 years and the next thing we know, North Korea has a nuclear weapon.”

The Illinois rep added, however, that if North Korea continued on its current path, the U.S. would have little choice other than military involvement.

“People are making a huge deal about the words, and that’s not going to start a war,” he said. “What’s going to start a war, if anything, but hopefully not, is North Korea’s pursuit of a weapon and their clear verbal desire to destroy the United States and our allies.”