

Rep. Rice Column: Workforce Development and Trade will build on our Economic Success

I came to Congress to restore American competitiveness and create opportunity for people who felt like they had been left behind. I knew the best way to achieve these goals was to reform our outdated tax code and limit the heavy hand of government in our everyday lives. I am proud that we passed pro-growth tax reform and regulatory reforms that have ushered in a new era of American prosperity.

The results of these policies speak for themselves. Since the passage of tax reform, the economy has reached 3 percent growth for the first time in 13 years and wages are growing at their fastest pace in a decade. Both national and local unemployment levels have reached historic lows and there are over 7 million open jobs in the country right now! America has reclaimed our title as the most competitive economy in the world, which is lifting the global economy as well. I am proud of all that we have accomplished to get our economy back on the right track and I am working in Congress to build on these successes.

One of the worst side effects of the recession was people being pushed out of the workforce and onto the sidelines of the economy. In 2016, it was claimed that President Trump would need a magic wand to bring back offshored middle-class jobs. As a result of pro-growth economic policies, there are now more jobs available than those looking for work. In other words, workers are back in high demand! The new challenge is developing our workforce and ensuring that people are equipped with the skills and training to fill these open positions.

In addition to promoting federal policies that will help bridge the skills gap, I am partnering with technical schools and educators across the Seventh District to help students connect with the opportunities available to them. The Seventh District is home to three technical colleges that offer skills-based programs that enable students to get high paying jobs following their training. We are working with these schools and local educators on strategies to engage students in these programs and prepare our workforce to fill these high skilled job openings.

For far too long, people in our community felt like they had to leave the area to find opportunities. With the Inland Port open in Dillon, new industries are flocking to the Pee Dee and creating jobs. Harbor Freight Tools- open just across from the port- has already created 1,000 new jobs. DMA Holdings is creating new jobs through a \$4.7 million capital investment. Ensuring people in the Seventh District have the skills to take on these unprecedented opportunities is key to continued economic growth in our region.

In addition to workforce development initiatives, I am also supporting the Administration's efforts to modernize our trade agreements. Some of our trade agreements have put American workers and industries at a disadvantage. President Trump and his Administration have taken on bad actors in this space to level the playing field for American businesses and workers. Successfully updating our trade agreements will build on the successes of tax reform and regulatory reform and give every worker and businesses a fair chance to succeed.

I am so proud of the progress we have made at both the national level and at home in the Seventh District. There is still more work to be done to keep our economy competitive- and I intend to do it!