

Untitled document

Written by Melissa Grima
The Berlin Daily Sun, May 25, 2012

BERLIN — "Take government seriously. We do a lot of things that have an impact on your lives." Those were the words Congressman Charlie Bass shared with the seventh graders at Berlin Junior High School on Thursday afternoon.

Bass visited briefly with the students to begin an afternoon tour of the Berlin area.

He spoke about his role as a Congressman, provided some background on his life and then opened up the floor to questions — at times turning the tables on the students and asking questions of his own.

The tweens didn't disappoint. They started easy, asking him if he had met the president? He has. In fact, he's met every president since Richard Nixon, in a variety of forums. Sharing his memories, he told the students that he met President Carter before he was elected and just after he left office as Governor of Georgia. Carter, he said, was a guest lecturer at Dartmouth while Bass was an undergrad.

They also checked in on his knowledge of the current candidates. Bass explained that he's met President Obama twice, and described him as very tall. He told the students that the president is very nice, and explained that to become president you have to be able to talk with people and have a good personality. He described the republican candidate Mitt Romney, to the students as an interesting man with a lot of experience. "I think the election this year will give voters an interesting choice between candidates who are very different," Bass said.

After the students were satisfied with his connections, and had discerned what kind of cars the congressman was into — he has a handful of antique cars which he listed — the questions got more serious. One student asked what Bass believed his greatest accomplishment was. He broke his answer into two parts. First he said, on a national level, he is proud to have been a member of the budget committee during the four years under President Clinton, when that committee brought the budget to the floor with a surplus. On the local level, he pointed to being able to secure the money for the Visitor Center in Lancaster as well as having been involved with the Burgess BioMass project from the beginning. "I'm pretty proud of this project," he said.

Another student asked what the congressman's thoughts were on bringing troops home from Afghanistan. He said that he supports the President's effort to bring the troops home and even suggested the timetable for withdrawal could be accelerated. "I think it would be appropriate to reduce our forces as quickly as possible," Bass said.

One Berlin Junior High staffer asked for his thoughts on the election in Egypt. Bass responded by explaining that he had visited Cairo about six months ago and believes that "this is a very important election." He added that Egypt, historically, does not appreciate foreign intervention, and believes that having a democratic election in one of the world's oldest civilizations will be

interesting.

Bass stressed his message that the students should be interested in politics and government. He pointed out that the economy and jobs affects everyone. Healthcare policy affects the hospital here in the city, tax policy affects the power plant project, and transportation policy affects road and bridge development and repair as well as ATV trails. Government controls healthcare, the military, and commerce as well as a lot of other things — "perhaps a little too much in some cases," Bass said. "It affects your lives."

The congressman, accompanied by his daughter Lucy who just completed her sophomore year at college, also presented the school with a new flag that had been flown over the Capitol prior to being brought to Berlin. Bass continued his tour of Berlin on Thursday, with stops at the the Burgess Biomass construction site, Presby Steel and Caron building supply.