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By John Toole

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WINDHAM – Congressman Charles Bass, touring businesses in Salem and Windham yesterday, said there's potential with the economy if politicians in Washington can get together to deal with important issues facing the nation.

"Everybody knows what our principles are. But the nation is crying out for solutions now. Republicans and Democrats have to bring their principles to the table and start working on solving problems," said Bass, a Republican from the 2nd Congressional District.

Bass was part of a bipartisan group of eight lawmakers who tried to build a federal budget around recommendations of the president's deficit reduction commission.

Bass, accompanied by local legislators, toured businesses at the Castle Commons development in Windham and also Technical Needs in Salem.

"The economy is weak but there is potential. We've got to get government out of the way, a lot more than it has been in the past," Bass said.

There is uncertainty in the business community over the new health care law, he said.

Businesses have been hesitant to hire, Bass said.

He has some ideas for helping small businesses.

"Simplify and lower taxes for small businesses, promote free trade, and give small business an opportunity to thrive and prosper with less government regulation," Bass said.

A brief press conference with reporters got around to the Interstate 93 widening and its importance to the economy.

The businesses at Castle Common illustrate a secondary effect of the widening – economic development, Bass said.

"I've been to a number of places in Salem and Windham that will benefit dramatically from expansion of this highway," Bass said.

He pledged to work in Washington for a transportation bill that would provide certainty and adequate funding for infrastructure priorities in New Hampshire's 10-year highway plan.

State Sen. Jim Rausch, R-Derry, said businesses will be successful because of the highway widening.

"We need this," Rausch said. "We need to push forward."

Windham selectmen's Chairman Bruce Breton said the widening will benefit the town.

"We know the highway is going to get done and we know the people are going to be using this town for commerce," Breton said.