

Boucher to host conference on PCEF education model

U.S. Representative Rick Boucher will host a Ninth Congressional District Education Conference, "Enhancing Educational Attainment: the Patrick Education Foundation Model," on Monday, April 23, at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon. Registration will begin at 9 a.m., and opening remarks from Congressman Boucher will begin at 9:30 a.m. The conference is open to the public without charge and is expected to conclude at 1 p.m.

"Improving the level of educational attainment among our region's residents is at the core of our economic development strategy and equipping local students with the skills required to be competitive in the global job market is essential to our effort to attract technology based employers to the region. The Patrick County Education Foundation is a shining example of a local education program that is achieving that result, and the Ninth District Education Conference will explore how this model can

be replicated in other Southwest Virginia localities," said Boucher.

The Patrick County Education Foundation was established to encourage Patrick County residents to prepare for 21st Century employment by creating educational opportunities and incentives for lifelong learning. In only six years PCEF has been credited with attracting new businesses and helping residents to earn more competitive wages and improve their quality of life.

Conference attendees will hear presentations from a series of exceptional speakers who will offer information on how the Patrick County Education Foundation achieved its remarkable success. Former Governor Gerald Baliles, who originated the concept for the Patrick County Education foundation, will discuss the purpose, history, and structure of the foundation. Gerald Hughes, executive director of PCEF, will explain how the foundation is aiding the development of new workforce partnerships and bringing new resources to the community.

Mark Kilduff, the former executive director of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, will offer his expertise on how labor force preparedness efforts can further economic development and growth. Finally, participants will hear presentations on how to develop an education foundation based on the Patrick County model from Mark Musick, president emeritus, Southern Regional Education Board, and James Quillen of East Tennessee University.

"During the course of the conference we will explore the best methods to prepare Southwest Virginia's workforce for 21st Century employment. I hope all those with an interest expanding our educational infrastructure and promoting economic development will take advantage of the outstanding resources that the conference offers," Boucher said.

To register for the conference, or to receive additional information, contact Congressman Boucher's Abingdon office at (276) 628-1145 or register by email ninthnet@mail.house.gov.