

To: The John D. Brademas Center for the Study of Congress

From: Meb Byrne

Date: September 6, 2009

Re: Congressman Maffei's Policy Approach to Green Jobs

## **History**

Through the first half of the twentieth century, Syracuse, New York, was a thriving factory town, crafting and assembling cars, shoes, furniture, air conditioners, and many other manufactured parts and goods. The booming manufacturing industry was hit hard in the 1970s by the outsourcing of jobs to Asian countries, and by the failure of many small businesses. Today, Syracuse, the central city of New York's 25<sup>th</sup> Congressional district, is by no means derelict, but it and the rest of the district are not thriving.

While campaigning for Congress in 2008, Dan Maffei stressed his goal to improve the 25<sup>th</sup> District of New York by increasing its economic growth. He stressed that small businesses are vital to communities, providing valuable services and essential sources of employment, and improving the neighborhoods in which we live. Since taking office on January 6, 2009, Maffei has been a leader in the fight to save small local businesses and auto dealerships, which often face forced, arbitrary closure.

Maffei has also been proactive in stressing the need, not just for the preservation of existing jobs, but also for the creation of new jobs. Specifically, Maffei has focused on environmentally friendly technology as a way to attract "green" jobs to the District.

## **Why Green Jobs?**

The 25<sup>th</sup> District of New York has a unique opportunity to become a hub of green energy in the coming months and years for several reasons. First, the most direct type of green job, the manufacture of equipment for green technologies, is enabled by the 25<sup>th</sup>'s manufacturing base in abandoned plants and factories. Downtown Syracuse has many empty buildings which could be restarted or converted into manufacturing plants. The 25<sup>th</sup> district is well-situated for several types of green energy: high hills are ideal for wind turbines, for example.

Second, several major highways run through the 25<sup>th</sup> district, including the original route of the Erie Canal, making the district ripe for a modern, efficient transportation system. Rebuilding and modernizing the district's roads, public transit and railways is overdue and absolutely necessary to maintain our safety and energy independence. This key tenet of our long-term economic plan and will pave the way for a new clean energy economy.

Third, New York's 25<sup>th</sup> district boasts several large universities and research programs, all of which have the potential to conduct studies and research on green energy. The work of these institutions has the triple effect of creating jobs now for scientists, creating jobs in the future for workers who will be needed to carry out the technologies developed by those scientists, and training current students to become scientists and conduct further research, years down the road. Such advantages could make Syracuse's institutions of higher learning a desirable destination for future researchers and entrepreneurs, bringing new constituents to the area and hopefully keeping them there.

## **What Congress Has Done**

The 111<sup>th</sup> Congress has worked diligently to pass legislation to restart the United States economy and get Americans back to work. Maffei's first act in Congress was to vote for H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which the House passed on January 28, 2009, by a vote of 244 to 188. The bill was signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. H.R. 1 will provide relief to New York's 25<sup>th</sup> district with \$800 billion worth of spending and tax cuts, including \$27.5 billion for highway construction, \$17.7 billion for green transit and rail modernization, \$16.5 billion for federal and other public infrastructure energy-saving projects, and \$18.8 billion for clean water, flood control, and environmental restoration investments. The legislation will create jobs, improve our nation's infrastructure, and give our economy the boost it needs.

The House also passed H.R. 2352, the Job Creation Through Entrepreneurship Act, on May 20, 2009, by a vote of 406 to 15, with Maffei voting in favor of the bill's passage. If enacted, the legislation would reauthorize programs designed to support small business owners. The bill is currently pending before the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

## **What Maffei Has Done**

### **Legislation**

Congressman Maffei introduced his first piece of legislation, H.R. 2743, the Automobile Dealer Economic Rights Restoration Act, on June 8, 2009, while I was interning on the Hill. To date, the Act has more than 260 co-sponsors in the House, and is currently pending before the

House Committee on Financial Services. If enacted, the bill would preserve General Motors and Chrysler car dealers' rights to recourse under state law. It would require that auto manufacturers have an ownership interest, in which the federal government is a lender, and it would continue to honor commitments prior to the economic crisis. All these measures will help to preserve small businesses and jobs across the country and throughout the 25<sup>th</sup>'s region. While the bill does not target green jobs, it focuses on maintaining existing work, and gives an indication of the type of job-centric legislation which the Congressman may introduce in the coming months and years.

### **Amendments**

Congressman Maffei has been praised for the leadership he has shown among the freshmen Congressmen in gathering support around various issues. I am impressed, however, that the Congressman does not always feel the need to take the spotlight; instead of introducing his own version of every bill, he finds the good in existing legislation and works to modify it through amendments.

The Congressman introduced an amendment to H.R.2187, the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act, to expand job opportunities for at-risk youths. The bill gives his district a chance to upgrade its school buildings and boost student achievement while creating good local jobs in new, clean energy industries. The Maffei Amendment will give opportunities to local institutions, like Onondaga Community College and the Job Corps program, to utilize federal funding for their programs, which train students and at-risk-youth to be a part of our new, green workforce. The House passed the bill on May 14, 2009, by a vote of 275 to 155. The bill was then sent to the Senate, where it is currently pending before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Congressman Maffei spoke on the House floor in support of the Nadler Amendment to H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, to increase increases transit capital funding by \$3 billion to a total of \$12 billion. The Amendment was passed with the bill and signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. This increased funding could help the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority, also known as Centro, close their \$5 million short fall, without raising fares, cutting service or eliminating routes. Due to the recession, ridership is at an all-time high and more working families are absolutely dependent on public transportation, making service cuts more harmful. The transportation funding could also be used to further green transportation initiatives, detailed below, which the Congressman supports.

### **Earmarks**

When I began my internship, I was concerned that Congressmen had little real power to enact on-the-ground improvements for their districts, since they legislate at the national level. Earmarks, I discovered, are a way around this problem. Congressman Maffei has secured a number of significant earmarks in various bills, which will be implemented soon to benefit New York's 25<sup>th</sup> district. Most directly, Congressman Maffei secured \$200,000 for the Syracuse Tech Garden in the Financial Services Appropriations Act. The funds will be used to bring together talented and accomplished technology business executives to learn more about clean tech industries, connect with policymakers, and identify new business opportunities.

The Congressman has connected green energy and green jobs to issues of immediate importance to his constituents, including veteran's affairs. Congressman Maffei secured funding for the 25<sup>th</sup> district from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act to benefit veterans,

including more than \$7.2 million for improvements at Syracuse VA Medical Center. The money will be used for non-recurring maintenance, such as roof replacement, upgrading to energy efficient light fixtures and implementation of conservation measures. In addition, VA will make a one-time payment of \$250 dollars to eligible Veterans and survivors to mitigate the effects of the current economy. The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates \$700 million in payments will be made, with payments beginning in June 2009.

Congressman Maffei has secured several earmarks for transportation initiatives as well, as mentioned above. Along with Reps. Slaughter, Arcuri, Lee, and Tonko, the Congressman secured \$4,595,000 in federal funding that will be used to improve track and begin the creation of a high-speed rail line between Buffalo and Albany with stops in Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica. \$1 million of the funds will go directly to New York's 25<sup>th</sup> district. Additionally, Congressman Maffei secured important funding for local transportation projects in the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act, including \$300,000 diesel electric hybrid buses for Central New York Regional Transit Authority (CNYRTA) Onondaga County operations and \$200,000 for the Syracuse University Park for Innovation and Research.

## **Summary**

In his first eight months in office, Congressman Dan Maffei has established himself as a proactive worker for bringing jobs to the 25<sup>th</sup> district of New York, and for the development of green technology and green employment. Through a combination of legislation, amendments, earmarks, floor speeches, and general advocacy, Congressman Maffei has laid the foundations for the rest of his term, and, hopefully, for his terms to come.