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JUSTIN HODGES | P-1

Congressman David Kustoff (left) speaks with Barry "Boo" McIntosh Jr., Security Bank chairman of the board, Monday morning during Kustoff's visit to Uncle Billy's Downtown Eatery.

Economy, pandemic on Kustoff's mind during visit

BY JUSTIN HODGES
POST-INTELLIGENCER

Congressman David Kustoff made an appearance at a downtown Paris restaurant Monday to speak with people in the community about economic issues and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kustoff, R-Germantown, who represents the 8th Congressional District, which includes Henry County and all of West Tennessee outside Memphis, has been touring different cafes, diners and eateries throughout West Ten-

nessee, talking with residents and showing support for local businesses in their operations.

He was at Uncle Billy's Downtown Eatery at lunchtime Monday, speaking to a crowd of about two dozen people.

"I want to take these next couple of weeks to travel around and listen to people, hear what's on their mind and get their opinions because that makes me a more effective legislator and congressman," said Kustoff.

Small businesses, such as Uncle Billy's, have found

ways to survive the pandemic despite drastic alterations in their budgets and operations. They've had help from Congress with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act that was signed in March.

The act features loans and grants given to owners through the Paycheck Protection Program, which has helped businesses continue operating and provided enough funds to keep employees working, Kustoff said. However, he said he has been stressing the need

for people to work and not rely on weekly unemployment checks.

"When I talk with small businesses I hear primarily two things," said Kustoff. "The first thing is that they are very thankful for the Paycheck Protection Program because for so many small businesses, it was literally a lifeline for them to keep their doors open and keep their employees on payroll."

"The second thing I hear is that the unemployment benefit is too high, and a small business can't compete with

the unemployment benefit in terms of pay. Some people are making more on unemployment than they are at their jobs. So when we go back to Washington and plan what we're gonna do next, we've got to make things more competitive," continued Kustoff.

Kustoff's visit comes days after President Donald Trump issued an executive order deferring payroll taxes and extending unemployment benefits, which will now be payments of \$400 for those out of work because of COVID-19. The actions have

been slammed by Democratic leaders, with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer telling ABC it's "unworkable, weak, and far too narrow."

"It's a good starting point, but the president shouldn't have to issue these executive orders. It should be Congress that passes the laws and makes the policy," Kustoff said. "Unfortunately ... Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer won't negotiate and won't come off the ball, and they're gonna have to. Ultimately I'm ready to make those decisions."

Medical center approves sale of vacant Tyson Avenue property

BY GLENN TANNER
POST-INTELLIGENCER

The Henry County Medical Center board of trustees has agreed unanimously to sell a vacant building on Tyson Avenue currently being used as a parking area.

In a called meeting Monday, the board agreed to sell its property at 317 Tyson Ave. for \$135,000 — almost \$65,000 less than what the medical center paid for it 14 years ago.

Lisa Casteel, hospital CEO, said the property, located directly to the southwest of Paris-Henry County Clinic, was initially purchased in 2006 for \$199,753 as a possible future expansion site for the hospital.

"Since that time, it has not been used by us and it has continued to deteriorate," Casteel said.

It's currently being used as hospital parking.

In the intervening years, the state has taken a right-of-way easement for a setback on Tyson Avenue property.

So long as the existing building is in place, or renovated, the new setback at that building is not required.

Should the building be torn down and a new one built in its place, the new setback would come into play, reducing the useable property size.

Over time, the hospital purchased the Kelley Clinic building and has added the Diagnostic Center, nullifying the need for expansion at the Tyson Avenue property.

Listed for sale with Moody Realty for the past few years, the hospital drew a few offers, but always well below \$100,000.

Casteel noted the \$135,000 offer was within market value range, based on recent purchases in the area.

Calling the property "an eyesore," Casteel said the sale would also put the property back on the tax rolls, since the medical center does not pay property tax.

Board member Peggy Beasley agreed the offer seemed reasonable.

"It's too bad that we bought it for more, but that's water under the bridge now," she said.

"I think it would be an upgrade to that area if someone would buy that and do something with it that's better than right now," said Scott Whitby, board chairman.

The sale will be recommended to the Henry County Commission for approval at its meeting next Monday.



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GLENN TANNER | P-1

Henry County Medical Center's board of trustees voted in a called meeting Monday afternoon to sell this property at 317 Tyson Ave. The building's parking lot is currently

being used by the hospital for employee parking. The building was formerly home to a ceramics shop, among other small businesses.

No federal relief leaves states, local governments facing big deficits

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

State and local government officials across the U.S. have been on edge for months about

how to keep basic services running while covering rising costs related to the coronavirus outbreak as tax revenue plummeted.

It's now clear that anxiety will last a lot longer. Congressional talks over another coronavirus relief package have failed, with no immediate prospects for a restart.

The negotiation meltdown raises the prospect of more layoffs and furloughs of government workers and cuts to health care, social services, infrastructure and other core programs. Lack of money to boost school safety measures also will make it harder for districts to send kids back to the classroom.

On Monday, governors, lawmakers, mayors, teachers and others said they were going to keep pushing members of Congress to revive talks on another rescue package.

"Congress and the White House made a commitment to the governors that there would be a second round of relief for states — we are going to hold their feet to the fire until they uphold that commitment," New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, a Republican, said in a statement.

How soon that might happen is anyone's guess. Congress has gone home, and President Donald Trump over the weekend took executive action

to address what had been a key part of the negotiations. He extended an extra benefit for the jobless but cut it by a third — to \$400 a week — and told states they would have to pick up 25% of the cost.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, a Democrat, urged Congress to restart negotiations, boost the jobless benefit back to \$600 and immediately provide more aid to state and local governments.

"Let's be clear about something: States are going broke and millions of Americans are unemployed, yet the solution called for states to create a new program we cannot afford and don't know how to administer

because of this uncertainty," he said.

LOCAL VIRUS CASES

TOTAL CASES: 290, up 24 since Friday
ACTIVE CASES: 191
RECOVERED: 99
DEATHS: 0

Reported at 2 p.m. Monday

Stay-at-home orders in the spring, business shutdowns and tight restrictions on businesses that have reopened are slamming state and local government revenue. In a June report, Moody's Analytics found that states would need an additional \$312 billion to balance their

budgets over the next two years while local governments would need close to \$200 billion.

Many states already are staring at ledgers of red ink. Texas is projecting a \$4.6 billion deficit. In Pennsylvania, it's \$6 billion. In Washington, the deficit is expected to be nearly \$9 billion through 2023. California's budget includes more than \$11 billion in cuts to colleges and universities, the court system, housing programs and state worker salaries. The pandemic's fallout also has trickled down to towns and cities, many of which are considering layoffs of police, firefighters and other essential workers.

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