



Local Business Owners Tell Legislators What's on Their Mind

Town hall styled event between business owners and legislators raised a range of issues and concerns.

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Les Vail

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In the middle of the Gloucester County Chamber of Commerce's Legislative breakfast event a town hall meeting broke out between attendees and two area state legislators. In topics that ranged from the impact new state legislation would have on small businesses to a heart-to-heart

discussion on legalizing marijuana, both attendees and legislators shared their views with one another.

"We host this legislative breakfast every year, with good turnout. This year's was no different but we wanted to change it a bit and really open it up to the audience to talk with legislators about their concerns," said Les Vail, president and CEO of the Gloucester County Chamber of Commerce. State Assemblypersons Gabriela Mosquera and Arthur Barclay fielded a variety of questions from the audience and gave measured, from-the-heart responses.

While discussing the expansion of the use of medical marijuana in New Jersey, Mosquera said there is good reasons behind it. The legislator, however, stopped short of supporting the legalization of recreational use.

"We don't know the full impact this would have," she said during the breakfast held Wednesday, May 2, at Adelphia's in Deptford, NJ.

Other questions centered on how changes in taxes and other state regulations would impact the business climate in New Jersey.

Another attendee expressed concerned for the rapid pace of enacting the \$15 an hour minimum wage and paid family leave on New Jersey's economy. The business owner raised concerns that the changes are coming too fast, which could hurt small business in the state.

Those changes are coming, Mosquera said. But the legislator added it is important for state representatives to hear from constituents to make sure there is a balance given to these concerns.

Vail stood beside two area educators to make the case for continued support for technical and

vocational school funding and said the chamber is ready to help where ever it can.

"Our advanced manufacturing businesses are having a hard time filling positions because there needs to be more training for people who want alternatives to the traditional college path," he said after the event.

Following the breakfast the legislators and audience members mingled and exchanged business cards to continue the conversations they started during the breakfast.

"If we can continue to influence these conversations to bridge gaps and improve the communication between Trenton and Gloucester County, that is a win for everyone," Vail said.

"This chamber is all about that. With nearly 1,000 members with a variety of needs, it is good to make sure we are a positive conduit between the legislative process and the business community," he said.

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