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Farmers hear forecast of government's impact Congressman's aide warns about cap-and-trade

BY DAVE KURTZ
dkurtz@kpcnews.net

GARRETT — Steve Howell offered some advice for how government can help farmers and itself.

"Do what you can to create an environment where agriculture can be profitable," Howell said. That way, farmers will not need to rely on federal safety net programs, he explained.

Howell, an aide to U.S. Rep. Mark Souder, spoke Wednesday morning at "Farmers and Philanthropy." The DeKalb County Community Foundation sponsored the breakfast meeting at Celebration Hall.

About 50 guests also heard FFA State Sentinel Kyle Malcolm, a 2009 graduate of Eastside High School.



FFA State Sentinel Kyle Malcolm, a 2009 graduate of Eastside High School, chats with Wendy Oberlin, executive director of the DeKalb County Community Foundation, after he spoke at the foundation's "Farmers and Philanthropy" meeting Wednesday in Garrett.

Foundation representatives explained their Agriculture Education Endowment Fund to support community education about agriculture. Donors already have given \$11,000.

As the featured speaker, Howell said "out-of-control spending will have more of an impact on agriculture than anything else" that happens in Washington, D.C.

Howell said it is growing less likely that Congress will pass a cap-and-trade law to limit carbon emissions.

"This district would really get hammered" by cap-and-trade, he said. A Heritage Foundation study found that carbon limits would hurt northeast Indiana's 3rd District more than any congressional district in the nation.

The 3rd District has more manufacturing jobs than anywhere, he said, and it depends heavily on coal for energy.

Despite the talk about alternative power sources, "You can't run a steel mill with a windmill," he said.

Under cap-and-trade, farmers could sell carbon credits for cash. But a 500-acre farm in DeKalb County would likely get no more than \$1,000 per year.

"It's hardly enough to make up for the price of fuel doubling and the price of electricity tripling under cap-and-trade," he said.

"Agriculture and the rest of rural America really do need to stand together," Howell said, because "commercial agriculture is really under attack" over practices such as confined animal feeding.

New methods help farmers produce a more uniform-quality product and sell it at a low price — giving consumers what they want, he said.

Howell added, "There's going to be less food if the animal rights people have their way — and it's going to hurt the poorest among us" if food prices rise.

Malcolm told the audience he will travel 20,000 miles this year, criss-crossing Indiana to spread the FFA message.

"I enjoy it a lot, because I meet so many people," he said.

He postponed attending Purdue by one year to serve as a state officer. However, he said his FFA work earns three Purdue credits each semester, and he will gain the advantage of all the contacts he is making.

During high school, Malcolm participated in the community foundation's DeKalb VOICE program that teaches young people about philanthropy.