

CONNECTICUT LEADERS WIN GRANT TO FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT

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Six Capital Region Groups Get Boost to Overcome Barriers to Employment

NEW BRITAIN - U.S. Reps. Nancy L. Johnson (R-CT) and John B. Larson (D-CT) announced today the six local organizations in New Britain and Hartford selected to implement a \$500,000 federal grant program to improve the delivery of unemployment services in the Capital Region.

The local organizations selected in New Britain are the Spanish Speaking Center, Inc., the Polish American Foundation of Connecticut, and OIC of New Britain. In Hartford, they are the Blue Hills Civic Association, Loaves and Fishes Ministries, Inc., and the SINA Job Center.

Johnson and Larson, in addition to Senators Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Joe Lieberman (D-CT), wrote to Labor Secretary Elaine Chao urging the grant award for the Capital Region.

"Many people in our state are hurting economically," said Dodd. "This assistance is exactly the right prescription to help get them back on their feet."

"During these difficult economic times, people who are looking to re-join the workforce deserve any assistance we can provide to help them provide for their families," Lieberman said. "This grant will go a long way to giving people in Hartford and New Britain the support they need to find decent employment."

"This grant will help these six groups knock down barriers to employment," Johnson said. "This grant will boost local social service agencies and help workers in New Britain and Hartford find the jobs they need to provide for their families."

"Hartford and New Britain have some of the highest unemployment rates in the state and this program will go a long way in addressing the needs of unemployed workers," said Larson. "Through the partnership between Connecticut's One Stop employment system and these six organizations, unemployment services will now be more accessible to people throughout region."

Under the program, called "Opening Doors," six smaller community or faith-based organizations in New Britain and Hartford have been selected to deliver quality, core unemployment services to those in the region that are in need. The funding will improve the capacity of the organizations to deliver services. Each organization selected will receive \$45,000 from the overall grant to facilitate the program. The effort will focus on job seekers that speak little or no English and delivering services to those who face language barriers. New Britain and Hartford together have a 10.2 percent unemployment rate, double the state's 5 percent rate.

The \$500,000 grant was awarded in July by the U.S. Department of Labor to the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) and the Capital Region Workforce Development Board (CRWDB), which will help implement "Opening Doors." CREC and CRWDB will provide customized technical assistance to the organizations and help each reach the organizational and staff capacity needed to deliver the appropriate level of employment services.

"Six organizations have come together to serve the best interests of their workers," said Dr. Bruce Douglas, Executive Director of CREC. "The more dispersed we are in providing one-stop services, the more friendly we are in providing those services to Connecticut citizens. We've become accessible, approachable, credible."

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