

Economy & Jobs

When Congressman Murtha was first elected to Congress in 1974, the steel and coal industries in the United States were in decline and the next ten years devastated Western Pennsylvania's economy.

In 1977, the City of Johnstown experienced its third catastrophic flood in a century. Over the following decade, the city and its people eventually rebuilt but the local steel industry never fully recovered. The flood of subsidized steel imports was ultimately more devastating than the raging flood waters. In 1983, the Johnstown region had the highest unemployment rate in the United States, a staggering 24 percent. As our region has rebuilt itself from devastating flooding and the loss of major industry, Congressman Murtha has diligently worked to build and diversify the economy throughout the entire 12th Congressional District, so that our region would no longer be reliant on one particular industry.

A key component of this economic development has been constructing new and rehabilitating obsolete infrastructure. Although sewage and water is not widely considered a flashy topic, it has been and remains key to economic development, especially throughout rural communities. Over the past thirty-plus years, he has worked with state and local officials and sometimes even private entities to secure over half a billion dollars for these projects that have resulted in thousands of new residential and business opportunities.

Another area where Congressman Murtha has had an impact is in helping our local industries, both existing and startup alike, by funding programs that help them improve the skills of their workforce while also increasing productivity and quality. With these programs and insight, local companies have successfully won competitive contracts working with the U.S. military, which has some of the most stringent requirements of manufacturers. In addition, he has been able to attract many defense contractors and subcontractors to Southwestern Pennsylvania who have saved billions of dollars by taking advantage of our regions low-cost competitive edge, quality work, and on time delivery. These efforts have further diversified the local economy.

Over the years he has funded programs that support our agricultural businesses, programs that retrain displaced mine workers, and he helped start the Center for Global Competitiveness which has opened up export markets to support job growth at many local industries. When Volkswagen moved out of its massive Westmoreland County plant in the 1980's, he worked to attract Sony to the facility, securing at its peak roughly 3,000 jobs for the area.

Tourism, Pennsylvania's second largest industry, is another area in which Congressman Murtha has secured funding to develop and market the many heritage and natural amenities Pennsylvania is blessed with. Recreation, a key component in demand by young professionals, is abundant in throughout our region. One example would be the many rails-to-trails projects that he's helped develop, including the Great Allegheny Passage, a continuous trail from Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C. that will soon be completed.

There are many pieces of the economic development puzzle. Some have a direct impact, like sewage and water, while others serve to enhance the attractiveness of our area, like recreation and quality of life. Congressman Murtha has endeavored to improve all of them while diversifying our economy so that our young people have the opportunity to stay in the area and still have a choice as to which career field they'd like to pursue.