

by LAURA BUCK, Staff writer, SoMDNews.com

House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md., 5th) spent Monday morning at the Calvert Career and Technology Academy, or CTA, on Monday morning where he met students and staff.

“Motivating our students and ensuring them access to education is a key component of Democrats’ Make It In America plan - a plan to create jobs and grow the economy by investing in education and innovation,” Hoyer said via a press release sent after he left the school Monday.

At the school to which, according to the release, students are bused from their home high school and generally spend a two-period block of their school day Hoyer visited several classes including health, computer assisted design, construction, welding and automotive.

“The most important people in our society are teachers, period,” Hoyer told the health class, continuing that students in that area are more important than ever these days with more Americans getting access to quality health care under President Barack Obama’s Healthcare Reform policy.

In the computer assisted design class, Hoyer spoke to teacher Gary Chapman and two students, Justin Riddle of Huntingtown High School and Sean Frost of Calvert High School, both of whom are seniors.

The students explained one of their projects in which they were given a general plan for a building which they then designed via computer software.

Hoyer told the students there was currently an “extraordinary” shortage of technical engineers in the U.S., meaning almost all electronics are now assembled overseas because there isn’t enough technical capacity in the country.

“Thank you for what you’re doing. ... When you get that house built, invite me over,” Hoyer told the students.

Riddle said he was excited to get an opportunity to talk to the congressman.

“I thought it was great to meet someone of that status who talked to us one on one. It’s really gratifying to let us know we’re doing something good,” Riddle said.

Calvert County Public Schools Superintendent Jack Smith said he thought CTA was a terrific place for Hoyer to visit.

“It connects theoretical learning to the practical applications in life,” Smith said of CTA, which he said also allows students to work together much like they would in their future places of employment.

In the welding class, its teacher, Dwight Bradford, explained to Hoyer that students learn “the basics of safety” in their first year while the second year is about “getting them ready for work.”

“Within five years of an apprenticeship they’re making 100 grand a year,” Bradford said.

“I don’t know if high school students know that,” Hoyer said.

Smith said for this reason, CTA Principal Mark Wilding has been doing some videos and media advertising the program.

“Our goal is to have every spot filled,” Smith said of the welding program.

Once students graduate from the program Bradford said they need to be willing to leave the county if they really want to earn a good living.

“They don’t want to get up at 4 in the morning. If you want to make money, you’ve got to be able to travel,” he said.

Automotive teacher Benjamin Lane explained to Hoyer that students in his class learn engine performance and electrical and brake inspection.

Lane said students are even able to perform inspections on members of the public’s cars and Wilding said he has brought his and his wife’s car into the class for routine work.

“They do a great job here, they really do,” Wilding said.

“We try to cover every aspect from beginning to end,” Lane said.

Hoyer later said via press release that he considered the morning a success.

“I was pleased to hear from students and faculty about their experiences at the Calvert Career and Technology Academy, and how the high school is preparing students for the workforce and motivating them to seek degrees in these fields at higher education institutions,” he said.

