

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Esty holds workshop for businesses

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TORRINGTON » Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty, D-5, led a panel workshop on Monday evening at City Hall regarding health care options available for small businesses under the Affordable Care Act.

The workshop was completed with the help of the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce and was meant to address questions or concerns local small business owners may have about the Affordable Health Care options. Five panelists including Esty took turns addressing each of their respective fields of expertise and agencies. About 20 people attended the workshop.

Esty said the state has been praised for its implementation of the healthcare website, which unlike the federal website that has been criticized for having issues online, has been running more smoothly. Connecticut is one of a handful of states who opted to create their own exchange, Access Health CT, which is allowed under the law.

Esty said the program is not perfect, but it's part of her job to make it better.

"Connecticut has been doing a really phenomenal job," Esty said. "We can be proud of being in a



ESTEBAN L. HERNANDEZ — REGISTER CITIZEN

U.S. Rep. Elizabeth Esty holds an Affordable Health Care workshop on Monday at City Hall in Torrington.

state that chose to stand up."

Enrollment in the state through Access Health CT, the state's marketplace, is about 13,000, business-to-business outreach manager for the marketplace Phil Boyle said.

"We have been very proud of the fact that we are up and oper-

ating," Boyle said. He said the federal website's issues did not affect Connecticut's website. Boyle was one of four panel members present.

Business owners with between 2 and 50 employees are eligible for small employment health options under the act. These options are

seen as ones that ensure key patients right. Tax credits for small businesses to help them offer employee health coverage are available; for example, one credit option covers up to 35 percent of the coverage for business with up to 25 employees.

Seth Goodall is the Regional Administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration. His region includes the state of Connecticut.

Goodall said that the healthcare act will help create a bigger pool of coverage for the state, which over time will help lower health care prices. He said ACA aims at increasing consumer benefits and providing tax-credits for small businesses.

Mary Rosen works at the Department of Labor and also serves the New England region.

"We have been working closely with health and human services to implement the law," Rosen said. Her agency helps investigate and figure out if the law is properly adhered to and help people choose what option may fit them.

Most attendees wanted to speak one-on-one with the panelists, although at least three audience members asked the panel a question.

One of the three was Dr. Robert Murphy, a physician in Torrington at the The Northwest Holistic Health Center. Among several of his questions was how the government could help cover some of the cost for the necessary electronic and computer equipment upgrades he needs to make. Goodall said there were some grant options available to help him cover the costs.