

YOUR CITY

Sen. Kerry optimistic about economy during FSC visit

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Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) admits that Americans face a tough year ahead, and that the unemployment rate will probably increase, but eventually the American economy will rebound.

"I am very optimistic about the long-term future," said Kerry, speaking at Fitchburg State College Tuesday night.

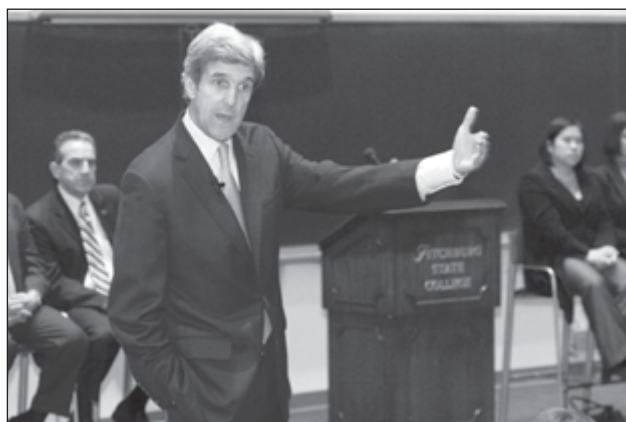
Transforming the economy to stay up-to-date with globalization and the latest advances in technology is what John Kerry considers the golden ticket to stimulating the American economy.

"The key is to have the tools to move into the new economy. The future is in producing these new technologies that people want," said Kerry.

About 150 FSC students and local residents attended the town hall meeting at Kent Recital Hall this week. Kerry held the "On Your Corner" listening tours, in which he visited communities in the state during election season.

Kerry pointed out that although he is not up for re-election for another six years, he is continuing with the community meetings. The night before, he held a similar meeting in Cambridge.

"I like doing these because it makes me a better



U.S. Sen. John Kerry speaks about the economy during a town hall meeting at Fitchburg State College.

PRIDE PHOTO / CHARLES STERNAIMOLO

advocate. I go down to Washington with a clearer sense of your priorities," said Kerry.

He told the audience that the most important work in America right now is being a citizen, and he encouraged audience members to speak their mind, and ask him any questions they had.

When Kerry was asked what can be done to make American labor more competitive with foreign labor, he said a big issue is taking some costs off the backs of companies, such as health insurance.

According to Kerry, about \$1,500 of the price of every car made in Detroit is solely to cover health care costs.

"Health care is a huge drag on our economy. We need to take that off of the businesses' backs," said Kerry.

Kerry was also asked about President-Elect Barack Obama's health insurance plan, which would make health insurance accessible to all.

Unlike in Massachusetts, where health care was made mandatory last year, Obama's plan would not nationalize health care, but make it attractive to consumers. Kerry supports this idea, because the incentives offered and the accessibility would make it a viable option for all.

In responding to a question about the Fair Tax Bill, Kerry said the tax system in the country has become very unfair, because some people are not paying their fair share of taxes.

Kerry believes that tax dodges, such as investing money in offshore bank accounts is greatly affecting the nation.

"As long as there are those tax dodges, they are facilitating terrorism and making it harder for our sovereign nation to survive," said Kerry.

He told the audience that a major overhaul of the tax system would be coming soon.

Kerry seemed optimistic that there would be changes in the Senate because of the increase in Democratic senators that will be in Washington in January. The number will shift from 51 to 58 or 59 (depending on the outcome of a recount in Minnesota).

"This is a golden moment. We have the opportunity to really transform the economy, to transform the political playing field," said Kerry.

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