

Yesterday, I joined the nation's top library official, Susan Hildreth of the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), to visit public and school libraries in Monroe, East Brunswick, and Princeton.

America's libraries are more widely used today than at any other point in history, with more than three quarters of Americans having visited a library in the last year. Yet these are trying times for libraries.

Even as libraries have lost funding from towns, counties, and states, they have experienced a surge in demand due to the millions of Americans looking for jobs and finding them using library services. In fact, an IMLS survey found that 30 million Americans used a library to address career and employment needs in 2009. The demand is not just for computers, but also for qualified librarians who can offer guidance on how to set-up an e-mail account, use resume formats, and file an online job application or unemployment claim.

As Director Hildreth and I saw in our visits, New Jersey libraries are working hard. In Congress I have introduced the Workforce Investments through Local Libraries (WILL) Act to integrate libraries into our job training efforts. My bill has been endorsed by the American Library Association, and I am very hopeful that it will be passed into law as Congress works to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act later this year.

### **Remembering Martin Luther King, Jr.**

At a time when inequality runs rampant and when so many across America are seeking work, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s message of equality, social justice, and economic opportunity resonates still after half a century. As Dr. King said in 1961:

"I look forward confidently to the day when all who work for a living will be one with no thought to their separateness as Negroes, Jews, Italians or any other distinctions. This will be the day when we bring into full realization the American dream—a dream yet unfulfilled. A dream of equality of opportunity, of privilege and property widely distributed; a dream of a land where men will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few; a dream of a land where

men will not argue that the color of a man's skin determines the content of his character; a dream of a nation where all our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone, but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity; the dream of a country where every man will respect the dignity and worth of the human personality. That is the dream.”

### **Earned Income Tax Credit Offers Support to Working Families**

One of America’s most important anti-poverty programs is also among the least recognized: the Earned Income Tax Credit, or EITC. In 2010 alone, the EITC lifted 5.4 million people, including 3 million children, above the poverty line.

The EITC is a refundable tax credit – that is, when the size of the credit exceeds the amount of taxes owed, a taxpayer receives the excess as a refund. It originated in the 1970s as a compromise between Democrats and Republicans who had differing views about the best way to fight poverty. Democrats had long supported lifting families out of poverty through the enactment of a strong minimum wage; Republicans had long argued that a high minimum wage would lead employers to hire fewer people.

The EITC provided financial support to working families, as Democrats desired, while avoiding any wage distortions in the labor market that Republicans feared. Presidents from both political parties have embraced and expanded the EITC for more than three decades.

Yet this tradition of bipartisan support has fractured in recent years. Republicans have increasingly attacked as “lucky duckies” the low-income families whose tax burdens are greatly reduced or eliminated by the EITC. Meanwhile, as the minimum wage has stagnated and our economy has faltered, the EITC has been forced to bear more and more of the burden of combating poverty – yet its increased importance has not been matched by increases in the tax credit’s size. Congress and the states should do more to support working families.

The IRS offers further details about the EITC, and a tool to help determine whether you are eligible, [on its website](#) .

Sincerely,

Rush Holt  
Member of Congress