

# Frank LoBiondo

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for jobs or the economy which are always key and crucial for us," LoBiondo said. "I've developed a partnership with the county and the state in a variety of different ways to produce results for the people of South Jersey."

He ticked off a list of accomplishments, including strengthening the local tourism economy, securing millions in federal funding to replenish and monitor erosion along beaches, and securing federal funds to replace infrastructure throughout the district.

The subprime mortgage crisis and the resulting legislation to provide \$700 billion of taxpayer money to bail out financial institutions consumed LoBiondo's time on the Hill recently. LoBiondo voted against the bailout legislation twice, on Sept. 29 and Oct. 3, after receiving overwhelming resentment from his constituents over whether the legislation would solve the economy's problems.

He criticized U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson's \$700 billion bailout plan to direct a team of experts in buying "toxic assets."

"This is the same individual that came to Congress about a year ago and said the economy is starting to sputter, we want to make sure we don't slide any deeper; we need a stimulus package. About \$150 billion should do it. This is also the same individual that came to us two months ago and said that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were in serious trouble and that we were in a crisis situation. And literally had only days to pass a \$300 billion bailout for them, which did nothing for Main Street. All it did was reward

the bad behavior by loan-sharks and speculators," LoBiondo said.

According to LoBiondo, Congress was left out in the cold in the decision-making process for the bailout package.

"I talked to countless people from local banks to local business people to financial advisors to mortgage brokers. We had no opportunity to give any answers of how it would work. We were sitting waiting for a product to be placed in front of us," LoBiondo said.

He said the bill's final incarnation included a "New Jersey-style Christmas tree" of items including tax credits for companies that promote bicycle commuting, expanding insurance coverage for mental health services and tax breaks for Puerto Rican rum producers and manufacturers of toy wooden arrows.

"It did nothing to address the concerns of folks who were in trouble through no fault of their own. It didn't address any concerns of small business or small community banks," LoBiondo said. "One of the things we desperately wanted in there were protections for taxpayers so that if this were along move that through and insurance plan that had been proposed the taxpayers would have been held harmless."

LoBiondo voted in 2003 to use military force to invade Iraq after the Bush Administration said there was evidence Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. The Iraq invasion became part of the larger War on Terror.

LoBiondo said he criticized former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's handling

of the war, and called for Rumsfeld's dismissal.

"I think that Mr. Rumsfeld added years on to our problem," LoBiondo said.

"Fortunately, Secretary (Robert) Gates and General (David) Petraeus embarked upon a thoughtful strategy which has produced tremendous results and has put us on a path to stability and withdrawal from Iraq."

LoBiondo said it would be "foolish" to abandon the current strategy in Iraq.

"There's ongoing negotiations and articles about the timetables that the U.S. and the Iraqis are ready to agree to all contingent upon the contingent success."

We're seeing a dramatic change from where we were a couple of years ago," LoBiondo said.

He credited Petraeus's strategy, the valor of the soldiers serving in Iraq and the Iraqi officials that rejected Al-Qaeda and the Taliban with turning the tide in Iraq.

"Two years ago many said the war was lost and we needed to get out immediately."

LoBiondo said. "In spite of all the negatives said at the time, I think there are pretty dramatic results up to this point. It's not perfect and not exactly where we need to be, but certainly well along the road to the right track of success."

LoBiondo's Democratic opponent, David Kurkowski is hammering LoBiondo on his record. Kurkowski claims LoBiondo allowed military contractors to monitor construction projects in the Deepwater program.

Created under the Clinton Administration, the Deepwater program was

developed and advocated by the Coast Guard to upgrade and replace their failing vessels and equipment. The Coast Guard realized many of their long-range cutters and aircraft were approaching the end of their operation life, with some cutters having entered service during World War II. The 25-year, \$24 billion project has local success with helicopters stationed at Air Station Atlantic City that are used in sea rescues and other emergencies.

In 2001, LoBiondo was named chairman of the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation. LoBiondo said he convened 14 congressional hearings during his six-year tenure and requested three independent investigations into the Coast Guard "Deepwater" program.

After the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, the Coast Guard was tasked with additional Homeland Security responsibilities and needed to improve its vessels and equipment.

"A decision was made that some of the 110-foot Coast Guard boats would be stretched into 123-foot boats. The engineering in that decision was seriously flawed. They did about ten boats and after they stretched them out and put them in the water, they realized that it wasn't going to work. Those Coast Guard assets were virtually rendered useless," LoBiondo said.

Not only were the boats not seaworthy, but radios were designed that weren't waterproof and could not transmit secure messages.

LoBiondo said the leadership on the Coast Guard

never gave the subcommittee straight answers. Eventually, the equipment was upgraded, he said.

The Coast Guard is currently suing the contractors Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman for \$93 million to recoup money lost on inoperable vessels. LoBiondo supports the lawsuit and the Integrated Deepwater Reform Act that shifts management and oversight of Deepwater to the Coast Guard.

"The mistakes that were made, the people should be held accountable. I'm fully supporting the complete investigation and the lawsuit on behalf of the taxpayers," LoBiondo said.

LoBiondo said although there was a serious mistake made with Deepwater, it's understood the program has its merits. He deflected Kurkowski's criticism as a campaign tactic.

"I understand that I'm the incumbent and the target and that's why you're hearing the charges that I'm totally responsible for everything that's gone wrong in the Western world over the last 14 years," LoBiondo said. "That's what his (Kurkowski) agenda's been."

Another area of contention was his opposition to offshore drilling and his eventual support of a bill that authorized offshore drilling.

He said the bill specified drilling over 50 miles, with a

state like New Jersey taking "affirmative and positive action to opt in."

"The plan I voted for was a tough vote. I don't think drilling off the coast of New Jersey is right," LoBiondo said. "My choice was to vote against it when gas was close to \$4 a gallon and I thought that would be saying to my constituents there is no problem."

LoBiondo said the vote helped affirm his positions on creating alternate energy opportunities for southern New Jersey including wind and solar power and conservation efforts.

Securing federal funding for beach replenishment projects has been trying for LoBiondo, after presidents Clinton and Bush reduced the flow of beach replenishment dollars. This past year, Ocean City, a municipality that has an agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers for periodic beach replenishment, was forced to partner with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for a beach replenishment project because federal funding didn't come through.

Though LoBiondo said he partnered with Sen. Frank Lautenberg and secured beach replenishment money for some towns, it is a constant struggle to get federal dollars for pumping sand on beaches.

"I think we're going to, for some time in the future, be fighting whoever is president, in how we deal with these projects," LoBiondo said.

# BID ordinance

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city and transferred to the district management corporation, which would determine how the funds are spent. BIDs normally use their funds for maintenance and promotion expenses.

The ordinance says the business community should be encouraged to "provide

self-help and self-financing programs" to meet its goals and objectives.

The Washington Street Mall Management Company is required to conduct its business in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Law, which means all meetings must be advertised and open

to the public. The 10-member board would be elected by business owners operating in the BID. Of the 10 members, three are to be property owners, three are business owners who rent property, a business owner or professional from within the city but outside the district, one member

of council, a Cape May resident who does not meet the other qualifications, and the city manager, who would not have a vote.

The district management corporation will be able to hire employees, such as a director to facilitate whatever programs, projects, or special

events the corporation authorizes.

Mayor Edward Mahaney said the creation of the BID means the city has achieved closure on a controversial issue in Cape May. The establishment of a BID was seen as a means of local businesses making a contribution, or

"putting some skin in the game," with regard to the taxpayer-funded improvement of Washington Street Mall. Mahaney said the creation of the BID is a reason for residents and business owners to become more united.

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