Former Republican Congressman Bob Franks enjoyed a long and distinguished career as a public servant to the citizens of New Jersey before his too-early death on April 9, 2010. Franks’ entrance into the political spotlight began in 1979 when he took his seat in the state Assembly, where he represented Union County for 14 years. Franks then served four consecutive terms as congressman for New Jersey’s 7th district, which covers parts of Union, Somerset, Middlesex and Essex counties. During this period of notable service, Franks earned a renowned reputation for his advocacy of mass transit and other transportation issues. He also sponsored numerous bills aimed at protecting children and was a founder and co-chair of the Missing and Exploited Children’s Caucus.

After an unsuccessful campaign for the U.S. Senate in 2000, Franks was appointed President of the HealthCare Institute of New Jersey (HINJ). The mission of this trade group, established in 1997 for the pharmaceutical research and medical technology industry, became Franks’ passion in the latter part of his career. As President, Franks was responsible for fostering greater understanding of the pharmaceutical and medical technology industry and for advancing the Institute’s objectives with New Jersey’s elected and appointed officials, media, citizens and opinion leaders. He also led HINJ’s efforts to align the interests of the pharmaceutical and medical technology industry with other stakeholders in the healthcare field, such as academic research institutions, hospitals, public health officials, physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals.

An Invitation

Bob Franks’ untimely death leaves the HealthCare Institute of New Jersey with much unfinished business. However, shortly before his death, Franks submitted an article to MDAdvisor entitled “We Work For Health: Working Together To Improve America’s Healthcare System And Remembering

Bob Franks

(September 21, 1951 – April 9, 2010)
Strengthen Our Economy.” This article gave us all a blueprint to better understand the role of the biopharmaceutical sector in helping to help strengthen the economy while also helping Americans lead longer, healthier lives.

In his trademark direct-and-yet-passionate style, Franks spoke in this article about a grassroots initiative sponsored by HINJ called We Work for Health. This program strives to highlight the connection between the financial health of New Jersey’s pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical technology companies and a healthy socioeconomic climate in this state—a state that has a higher concentration of these companies than any other state in the nation.

In his article, Franks reminded readers that the national healthcare reform debate will have a profound impact on our society, our economy and particularly the pharmaceutical and medical technology industry. As healthcare reform measures are implemented, he felt it would be essential that policy makers in Washington understand the local economic benefits that New Jersey life sciences companies provide to our state and local communities.

The facts included in Franks’ article were indeed compelling. He noted that New Jersey employs nearly 60,000 people at more than 125 pharmaceutical and medical technology facilities across the state. Spin-off jobs account for an additional 88,000 men and women in the New Jersey workforce directly dependent on the pharmaceutical and medical technology industry. In 2008, New Jersey’s life sciences community had a record $29 billion impact on our economy and paid nearly $1 billion in taxes to the state. This industry has more than $3.37 billion on the drawing board for capital construction and facility renovation projects.
around New Jersey over the next two years, which will generate over 7,500 daily jobs for building, construction and trade unions around New Jersey. Franks mapped out the many ways in which our economic partners in biopharmaceutical companies generate tax revenue, create high-paying jobs and provide growth opportunities for related industries and domestic labor. After outlining these economic facts, Franks highlighted the bottom line. “Simply put,” he said, “our state cannot afford to lose any more jobs.”

Franks then conveyed his belief that an additional value of We Work For Health is its ability to provide opportunities to learn about important healthcare topics. He encouraged people to get involved in the issues that affect each of us as healthcare consumers, healthcare practitioners, biopharmaceutical industry vendors and suppliers, elected officials or members of the business/academic community.

In the conclusion, Franks extended his hand, saying: “Each and every one of us plays an important role in helping Americans gain and maintain access to life-saving medicines, prevent chronic disease and lead longer, healthier lives. The HINJ now invites you to join the initiative to advance the goal of a healthier America.”

To learn more about how you can honor the legacy of Bob Franks by participating in We Work For Health, please visit: www.weworkforhealth.org.