



Federal Priorities in Missouri's Meramec Region

2011

2011 Congressional Issues in the Meramec Region

The board of the Meramec Regional Planning Commission wishes to share priorities with you, our Congressional leaders, that are of interest to our organization as a whole and to our individual cities and counties. They are:

TRANSPORTATION:

- Improve Highway 50 and Highway 63 to four-lane highways to stimulate growth, and industry and promote safety. Encourage federal funding for improvements to Highways 50 & 63.
- Provide enhanced and sustainable funding for the nation's highway, aviation and transit needs and find a means to fund the Federal Highway Trust Fund, as a part of the reauthorization bills for SAFETEA-LU and AIR-21.

Specifically, the SAFETEA-LU bill should:

- Elevate the status of rural local officials from "consultation" to "cooperation" in statewide planning processes.
- Establish a federal definition of Rural Planning Organizations.
- Require state DOTs to designate and fund RPOs to help address transportation needs in non-metro areas. Access to quality roads for the movement of goods across this nation is vital to the prosperity of our cities, counties and states.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- Provide more federal assistance for public infrastructure: highways, bridges, locks, dams, sewer/water systems, WPA-type projects, etc. Many Missouri cities need to upgrade their infrastructure to meet ever changing requirements for their constituents and local businesses, but do not have the needed tax dollars. We need more grant funding and federal and state support in this area. The increased economic development resulting from new infrastructure would provide additional money to improve other infrastructure.
- Encourage fiscal responsibility and balanced budgets; encourage job creation and keep grant funding for rural areas.
- Need affordable high-speed internet access for our rural communities. We are being placed at a great disadvantage in this fast paced world. As we slip further out of sync, our people fall further down the economic ladder. Continue to fund high speed internet access.
- Fully fund the existing portfolio of federal community and economic development programs, most notably the Economic Development Administration's (EDA's) infrastructure, economic adjustment assistance and district planning grant programs and HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and Small Business Administration (SBA) business lending programs. Specifically:
- Reauthorize and fully fund EDA, and include (1) A provision that planning grants will be increased if appropriations are increased, (2) A provision that would lower the local government cost share on grants, and (3) A provision that would allow local control and ownership of RLFs, once fully revolved.

*Members
of the Meramec Region's
Congressional Delegation:*

**The Honorable Sens. Claire McCaskill
and Roy Blunt and Reps. Jo Ann
Emerson, Blaine Luetkemeyer
& Vicki Hartzler**

The Meramec Regional Planning Commission, representing eight counties and their respective cities, is pleased to present its 2011 Federal Priorities agenda to you. In addition to our specific priorities, our board encourages fiscal responsibility and asks that Congress achieve a balanced budget. We encourage efforts that create jobs and offer grant funding for rural area, such as ours. We look forward to working with you, and we thank you in advance for your consideration of our 2011 Federal Priorities.

Sincerely,

Gary Brown
MRPC Vice Chairman

- Fully fund USDA rural development grant programs for infrastructure improvements, businesses development, community facilities, housing and broadband services.
- Fully fund the Delta Regional Commission (DRA), which serves four Meramec counties and include a provision that DRA planning grants will be increased if appropriations are increased.

HEALTH CARE and PUBLIC TRANSIT ISSUES:

- Equalize Medicare reimbursement rates for rural and urban hospitals.
- Foster environment for formation of health care consortium (public and private.)
- Support a study of the effects of lowering the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 60. The overall health of retirees improves which improves the Medicare pool without cost to the federal government. Availability of Medicare may move workers to retirement, which opens jobs for younger workers.

ENERGY

- Oppose Cap and Trade legislation because of the burden of increased energy costs it would place on local governments and Missouri businesses and opposes EPA being allowed to administer and set regulations for carbon dioxide.
- Aggressively encourage construction and use of nuclear power with safe, economical disposal of spent fuel.

HOMELAND SECURITY and EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- Build upon the experience, capacity and skills of regional planning commissions to coordinate, plan and implement homeland security and emergency preparedness activities on a regional basis and allow local decision-making.
- Ensure rural regions receive adequate resources and equitable access to the broad portfolio of homeland security and emergency preparedness programs, including first responder, pre-disaster mitigation and all hazards mitigation resources. In addition, fully fund FEMA's flood map modernization and pre-disaster programs.

EDUCATION

- Support technical training for our labor force. This could be in the form of more incentives for schools to provide access to more intensive technical classes or assistance for our people to attend a two-year program, including satellite classes.
- Encourage greater emphasis on reading, writing, math and science competency. Also encourage the emphasis of reading and writing as they relate to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.)
- Encourage additional funding to assist students with federal grants and loans.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES:

- Eliminate unfunded federal mandates to states or fully fund them. Many times these mandates trickle down to small local governments. We see this in many areas, including federal elections and wastewater/storm water regulations.
- Develop and implement a plan to collect sales tax on Internet sales and redistribute to state and local governments.



The Meramec Regional Planning Commission. . .

Is a voluntary council of local governments serving the Meramec area of Missouri. The MRPC area includes the eight counties of Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski and Washington and their respective cities. The mission of MRPC is to enhance the quality of life for residents of the Meramec Region. In pursuit of this mission, MRPC will bring about results in these areas:

- *Cleaner, healthier and safer communities,*
- *Greater socioeconomic and cultural wealth through community and economic development, and*
- *A stronger, unified voice in the legislative process.*

For more information, contact:

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This report was hand-delivered by Executive Director Richard Cavender and Vice Chairman Gary Brown