



# Federal Priorities in Missouri's Meramec Region

## 2008 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.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- 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. Maintain the mission and integrity of EDA and USDA Rural Development and increase funding for both.

- Provide opportunities for affordable high speed internet access for rural communities. Rural areas are placed at a great disadvantage in this fast-paced world. The lack of high speed internet service puts rural residents further down the economic ladder.

### HEALTH CARE and PUBLIC TRANSIT ISSUES:

- Create affordable health insurance for all, and expand and/or continue support for federally qualified health centers.
- Need higher Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement rates for rural hospitals.

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

**The Honorable Sens. Kit Bond and Claire McCaskill and Reps. Jo Ann Emerson, Ike Skelton & Kenny Hulshof**

The Meramec Regional Planning Commission, representing eight counties and their respective cities, is pleased to present its 2008 Federal Priorities agenda to you. We want to express our appreciation to each of you for your past efforts on our behalf. You have assisted our region, as individual governments and as a group, in many significant ways. Most importantly, you and your staffs have always taken the time to discuss legislation, grants and issues of local concern. We thank you in advance for your consideration of our 2008 Federal Priorities.

Sincerely,  
Robert Reed  
MRPC Chairman

- Re-authorized the Older American Acts to include employment-based public transportation as an eligible service. The Older Americans Act (OAA) provides funding for public transit services for older Americans. OAA limits the type of services that transportation providers can be reimbursed for. Allowable trips include those to nutrition sites, medical appointments and for shopping and business purposes. However, OAA will not reimburse for employment transportation. More seniors are working, and many of these seniors are low-income and are working to survive. They can't afford to own their own vehicle, purchase insurance and pay for gas. OAA, when re-authorized, show allow for employment-based public transportation.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:

- Continue to work toward energy independence. Open ANWR; Speed up refinery construction, support usage of alternative fuels – hydrogen, solar, wind and renewable – biomass conversion, etc., as well as nuclear alternatives. Encourage new sources of energy other than using food products, like corn and soybeans, and consider switch grass, wood by-products, coal, etc.
- Amend the 2005 Mark Twain Forest Plan to reflect previous policies. Present plan calls for reducing timber sales by 2 million board feet per year; and converting over 400,000 acres from timber production to glades and savannahs or open woodlands. The '05 plan places a bull's-eye on the timber industries of south Missouri.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES:

- Eliminate unfunded federal mandates to states or fully fund them. Many times these mandates trickle down to small local governments. Prime examples include federal election costs and wastewater/stormwater regulations.
- Restore to previous level the payment in lieu of taxes program on federal lands.

#### EDUCATION:

- Support technical training for our labor force. This could be in the form of more incentives for our schools to offer more intensive technical classes; or assistance for our people to attend a two-year program close by. Rural students can attend Rolla Technical Institute but their numbers are limited to how many a school bus will hold. The Meramec Region needs a more local solution.

*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.*

# MRPC

For more information, contact:

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*This report was hand-delivered by Executive Director Richard Cavender and Board Member Marcus Maggard.*