



## Federal Priorities in Missouri's Meramec Region

### 2016 Congressional Issues

The Meramec Regional Planning Commission board wishes to share its 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:

- Provide enhanced, sustainable funding for the nation's highway, aviation, prioritized freight routes and transit needs and find a means to fund the Federal Highway Trust Fund.
- Encourage federal funding for improvements to Highways 50 and 63, which are identified as freight routes in the Missouri State Freight Plan, in the Meramec Region.
- Establish federal funding mechanism for freight corridors identified in the Missouri State Freight Plan.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- Make adjustments to the Davis-Bacon Act to allow small, rural communities to waive prevailing wage requirements for all projects costing less than \$250,000.
- Continue to promote Fort Leonard Wood (FLW) using the results of the Joint Land use study and Missouri's Military Infrastructure Report, FLW is an economic engine that puts over \$2 billion annually into the Missouri economy.
- 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 from new infrastructure would provide additional money to improve other infrastructure.

#### HEALTH CARE and SOCIAL SERVICE:

- Equalize Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates for rural and urban hospitals.
- Repeal or correct nonworking components of the Health Care Reform Act and keep the provisions that work. As employers and local governments, we have concerns about:
  - The creation of the Patient Centered Outcomes

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

*The Honorable Sens. Roy Blunt and  
Claire McCaskill  
Reps. Blaine Luetkemeyer,  
Vicki Hartzler and Jason Smith*

The Meramec Regional Planning Commission, representing eight counties and their respective cities, is pleased to present its 2016 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 areas, like ours. We look forward to working with you, and we thank you in advance for your consideration of our 2016 Federal Priorities.

Sincerely,

T.R. Dudley  
MRPC Chairman

Bonnie J. Prigge  
Executive Director

Research Institute and related fees (\$2.08 per person per year), which will play a major role in determining what health care procedures are necessary;

- The Modified Community Rating, where rates will be based on age, tobacco usage, geographical location and family tier with no consideration allowed for health status when pricing; and

- The 40 percent Excise Tax that will be accessed on "Cadillac" plans in 2018 tax year.

- MRPC supports full administrative funding for housing authorities, to effectively deliver programs that provide safe, modest, affordable housing for veterans, disabled and elderly. These programs help maintain the quality of housing in communities by establishing and enforcing hous-

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ing quality standards, which benefits the families served. The Housing Choice Voucher administrative fee has been reduced for over a decade and is currently at 79 percent of the original funding, with no reduction in the administrative burden. Underfunding of administration is resulting in housing authorities struggling to effectively meet the needs of their respective communities and efficiently meet the regulatory requirements of the programs they coordinate. In order to continue to provide these much needed services, full administrative funding must be restored.

## ENERGY:

- Aggressively encourage construction and use of nuclear power with safe, economical disposal of spent fuel. Continue to support research and development of small modular nuclear reactors.
- Continue to work toward energy independence. Encourage research of other crops to develop new sources of energy rather than using food products like corn and soybeans. Explore environmentally friendly ways of drilling for oil and use them. Pursue oil shale while exploring solar, wind and biomass conversion energy, hydro-electric, co-generation energy and expand nuclear energy production.
- Continue to oppose Cap and Trade legislation because of the burden of increased energy costs it would place on local governments and Missouri businesses and oppose EPA being allowed to administer and set regulations for carbon dioxide. MRPC opposes EPA rule-making that will result in billions of dollars of added costs for citizens who depend on coal fired power plants for electricity. Much of the energy needs in the Midwest are met by coal fired plants and affordable power is a cornerstone of our economic development strategy in rural areas.

## HOMELAND SECURITY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:

- Support for continued funding and expanded missions for Fort Leonard Wood. This base is strategically located, with no encroachment issues and is a leader in Inter-service Training.
- 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 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:

- 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.)
- Support technical training initiatives such as the Missouri Certified Work Ready Community program, MO Wins and MO Health Wins programs 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 additional funding to assist students with federal grants and loans.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES:

- Eliminate unfunded federal mandates to states or provide funding options/opportunities to states and/or local governments to fully fund them.
- Preserve the current tax exemption for municipal bonds. Tax-exempt financing, used by both state and local governments to raise funds to finance public capital improvements is critical to sustain economic growth. Currently the senate finance committee is considering eliminating the tax exemption for municipal bonds as part of tax reform.
- Recalibrate EPA wastewater standards to reduce the fiscal impact to the local governments/communities. Clean Water Act requirements for wastewater treatment facilities are extremely difficult for small, rural communities to meet. If changes cannot be made in the regulations, these communities need additional assistance in meeting those requirements through technical assistance and grants to upgrade facilities.

## GENERAL ISSUES:

- Encourage all parties to work together for the betterment of our country. Congress should work together with other office holders to move the country forward and not allow another session of gridlock. There must be more compromise.
- Overturn the 2010 "Citizens United" supreme court ruling that says political spending by corporations cannot be prohibited by the government and is protected by the First Amendment. Some legal scholars believe it will require an amendment to the constitution to overturn this ruling.
- Stop implementation of the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) by EPA and US Corps of Engineers.



## 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.

## Meramec Regional Planning Commission

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This report was hand-delivered by:

MRPC Chairman T.R. Dudley, mayor of Potosi, Mo., MRPC Executive Director Bonnie J. Prigge and MRPC Assistant Director Tammy Snodgrass