

ABOUT MRPC

MRPC is a voluntary council of local governments serving the Meramec area of Missouri since 1969. The 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 socio-economic and cultural wealth through community and economic development, and
- A stronger, unified voice in the legislative process.

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This report was hand-delivered by: MRPC Chairman Larry Miskel, Gasconade County, Mo, Presiding Commissioner, MRPC Executive Director Bonnie Prigge and MRPC Assistant Director Tammy Snodgrass.

Members of the Meramec Region's Congressional Delegation:

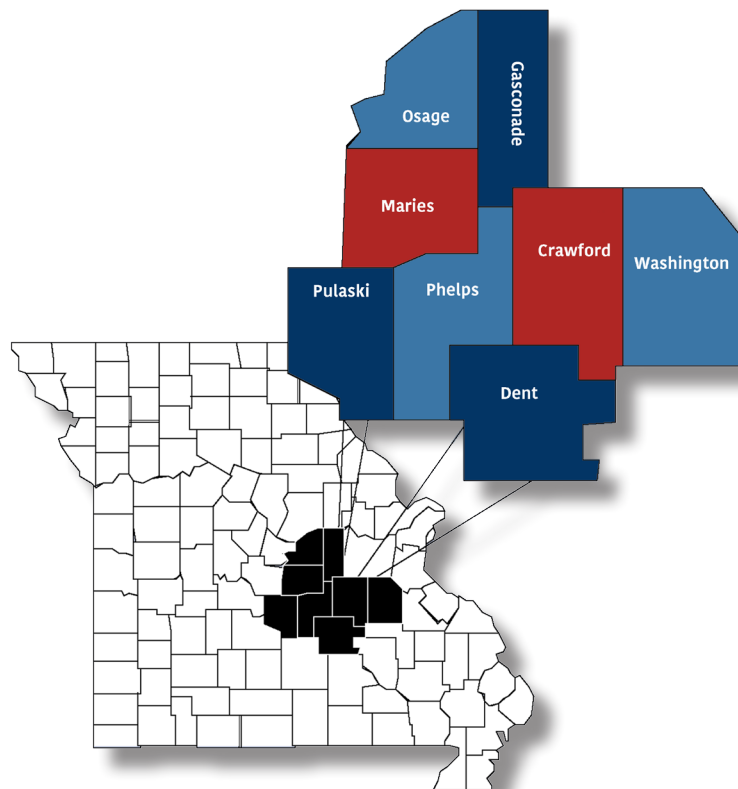
The Honorable Sens. Roy Blunt and Josh Hawley
Reps. Blaine Luetkemeyer, Vicky Hartzler and Jason Smith

The Meramec Regional Planning Commission, representing eight counties and their respective cities, is pleased to present its 2019 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 2019 Federal Priorities.

Sincerely,

Larry Miskel
MRPC Chairman

Bonnie J. Prigge
Executive Director



Federal Priorities in the Missouri Meramec Region

2019 Congressional Issues

Prepared by:
Meramec Regional Planning Commission
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2019





MRPC

A Voluntary Council of Local Governments Since 1969

TRANSPORTATION:

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

HEALTH CARE & SOCIAL SERVICES:

- Equalize Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates for rural and urban hospitals.
- Continue to fund quality health care for the uninsured, underinsured and the underserved population in the region.
- Support full administrative funding for public housing agencies. Housing assistance programs provide safe, modest, affordable housing for veterans, the disabled and the elderly. These programs help maintain the quality of housing in communities by establishing and enforcing housing quality standards, which benefit not only the families served, but the communities as well. In order to continue to provide these much needed services, full administrative funding must be restored. The pay-out from HUD on the administration fee has remained stagnant for several years between 75 and 80 percent of the approved rate.
- 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 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 the 2018 tax year.

EDUCATION:

- Support technical training initiatives such as the 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 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 STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics.)

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

- Provide high speed internet to all residents. This issue needs to be addressed in the same way that electric cooperatives provided electricity to all rural residents. The issue is the last mile of distributing fiber optic cable. Providers tend to install infrastructure where the population is large enough to make it profitable, leaving rural areas without adequate internet.
- Provide more federal assistance for public infrastructure: highways, bridges, locks, dams, sewer/water systems, WPA-type projects, etc as well as fully fund the existing portfolio of federal community and economic development programs, most notably the Economic Development Administration's infrastructure, economic adjustment assistance and district planning grant programs and HUD's Community Development Block Grant program, Delta Regional Authority and Small Business Administration business lending programs. Rural areas depend heavily on these programs for infrastructure improvements. Additionally the increased economic development resulting from new infrastructure would provide additional money to improve other infrastructure.
- Make adjustments to Davis/Bacon Act that 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.

ENERGY:

- 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 ensure that Cap and Trade legislation is not enacted because of the burden of increased energy costs it would place on local governments and Missouri businesses and continue to prevent the 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:

- 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 responders, pre-disaster mitigation and all hazard mitigation resources. In addition, ensure fully fund FEMA's flood map modernization and pre-disaster programs.

ENVIRONMENT:

- Continue to support and protect our national parks, monuments, wildlife reserves and public lands — which are held in trust for the American people — not for the purpose of corporate profits, but for the enjoyment and economic benefit of future generations. There must be a balance maintained in the appropriate use and maintenance of these lands (through grazing and timber harvest) that benefits local communities as well as the general public without inflicting environmental damage.
- Reauthorize the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which expired on Sept. 30, 2018. For more than 50 years, the LWCF has helped fund projects in national parks, national forests, wildlife refuges, monuments and more than 40,000 state and local parks throughout the country.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES:

- Eliminate unfunded federal mandates, such as federal expectations and wastewater/stormwater regulations, 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.
- Continue mandatory funding for Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program and reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools Act and make the use of these funds more flexible.

GENERAL ISSUES:

- Continue to protect Medicare and Social Security. These are not entitlement programs — working Americans paid into these programs and entrusted the federal government to administer them properly. Relabeling them as entitlement programs and branding them as a government "handout" is a falsehood that the majority of citizens will not believe. Current federal deficits are based on over spending and providing tax cuts. Do not sacrifice middle class Americans' retirement security in order to further enrich corporations, special interest groups and the wealthiest campaign contributors.
- Encourage all parties to work together for the betterment of our country. Our expectation is that congress will work together and with other office holders to move the country forward and not allow another session of gridlock. There must be more compromise and statesmanship and less politics.
- Overturn "Citizens United" supreme court ruling. (This 2010 ruling holds that political spending by corporations and unions cannot be prohibited by the government as it is protected by the First Amendment. Some legal scholars believe it will require an amendment to the constitution to overturn this ruling.)

