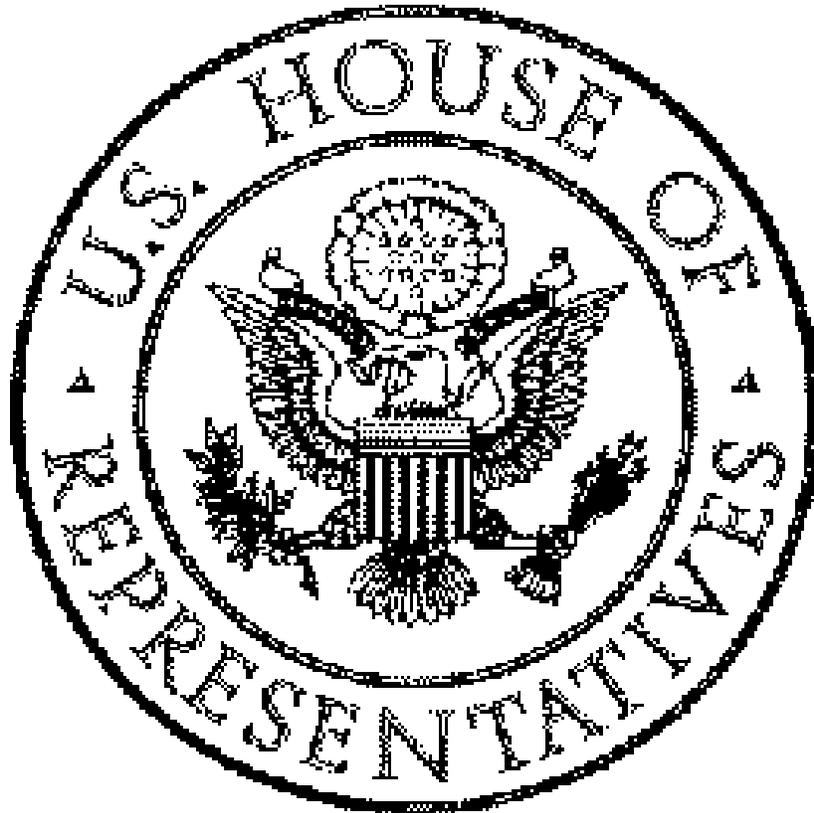


CONGRESSMAN
Rick Boucher



Ninth District
Virginia

Annual Congressional Activities
Report for 2007



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

December 2007

Dear Community Leader:

Each year at this time, I am pleased to provide a comprehensive report of my major activities in the Congress during the preceding year which are directed toward improving the quality of life in Southwest Virginia.

The annual report is designed for community leaders in the Ninth District who have taken a larger than average interest in this work and who have participated with me in achieving these successes.

My highest priority is the creation of new jobs for the region. Highlighted in the report is the progress made in the last year in the multi-faceted strategy to enhance economic development in the many sectors of Southwest Virginia's economy, including attracting technology based jobs to the region, encouraging the formation of small businesses, improving transportation, expanding tourism, obtaining funding for community infrastructure projects, advancing the telecommunications network and supporting the regional farm economy.

I am also pleased to note the greater benefits we are receiving through the innovative use of information technology. We now have more hospitals and clinics equipped with broadband-connected telemedicine capabilities than any other Congressional district in the nation, and the fiber-optic based distance learning network provides instruction in advanced courses in 55 electronic classrooms throughout the district.

I hope you will take a few minutes to review the report. Your comments on the matters it contains and your suggestions for new projects to advance the quality of life of Southwest Virginians will be most welcome.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Boucher".

RICK BOUCHER
Member of Congress

I. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: MY TOP PRIORITY

A. SHOWCASING SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

Since its inception in 1987, my Showcasing Southwest Virginia program has stimulated the region's economy by bringing nearly 5,000 jobs to the Ninth District. The program's successes continued in 2007:

1. **XM Satellite Radio Brings 240 Jobs To Galax** – In February, my Showcasing Southwest Virginia program achieved a major success when the new XM Satellite Radio Customer Service Center opened its doors in the City of Galax. The center is operated for XM by The Results Company, a nationwide provider of customer support services for Fortune 500 clients in the telecommunications, insurance and financial sectors. The Galax facility serves as XM's flagship call center and employs 240 area residents in technical support and management positions.
2. **Results Brings New Jobs to Patrick County** – This Fall, the Results Center in Patrick County added 40 new positions bringing the total employment at this facility to 240 workers. Results began operations in Patrick County last summer with 65 employees following participation by the company in my Showcasing Southwest Virginia program. Based on a highly successful launch and the outstanding workforce available in the region, the company has steadily added new positions and now ranks among the top 4 private sector employers in Patrick County.
3. **Aerial Adds New Jobs in Patrick** – This Summer, the Aerial Machine and Tool Corporation in Vesta underwent a large expansion and plant renovation project. I assisted the company in obtaining state and local support which enabled the addition of 52 jobs at this facility. Aerial develops and manufactures products for military, aerospace, search and rescue, industrial safety, law enforcement and paramilitary applications. I look forward to working to assure the continued growth of this Patrick County employer.
4. **Showcasing Southwest Virginia Tours Promote Region to Technology Companies** – In 2007, my Showcasing Southwest Virginia program focused on the attraction of information technology, energy, and transportation companies to the region. I hosted tours for corporate executives of ten well known companies who visited the Ninth District at my invitation during the year. My goal is to encourage a range of businesses to invest in Southwest Virginia. The attraction of these companies will be a continuing priority in 2008.

B. TOURISM: A MAJOR SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

A major focus of my office's economic development agenda is the expansion of Southwest Virginia's tourism economy which has tremendous growth potential. With the state's best outdoor experience and Virginia's most interesting cultural offerings, we truly have much to attract the traveling public.

- 1. Federal Funding Obtained for Daniel Boone Interpretive Center**– At my request, the Appalachian Regional Commission is providing a federal grant in the amount of \$400,000 to the Scott County Economic Development Authority for the construction of the Daniel Boone Interpretive Center. When completed, the Center will function as a major regional tourist attraction, chronicling the history of Southwest Virginia as a gateway for Western expansion through the Appalachians. The Interpretive Center is the first step in a multi-phase project, which will eventually also include an agricultural exposition center. It is anticipated that the Center will attract 90,000 visitors each year and will generate \$850,000 in revenue annually for the region's economy.
- 2. Fishers Peak Trail System Opens** – During the Fall, I was pleased to participate in the formal opening of the new Fishers Peak trail system at the Blue Ridge Music Center in Carroll and Grayson Counties. The Music Center attracts tens of thousands of visitors to the region annually, and the new trails will offer yet another recreational activity as travelers come to experience the unique cultural offerings and scenic beauty of the Twin Counties. At my urging \$25,000 in federal funding was provided to purchase materials for several bridges and creek crossings along the new trails.
- 3. Fieldale Walking Trail Opens** – The Fieldale Walking Trail, which I participated in opening this summer, is the first link in a large network of trails currently planned for Henry and Patrick Counties and the surrounding region to provide river access and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. The mile-long Fieldale trail is designed for walking and biking, and will in time connect with Henry County's Smith River Trail, which is currently being developed along the Danville and Western Rail line using a \$400,000 federal appropriation I previously obtained. The Smith River trail will be extended in future years to join with trails in Martinsville and Pittsylvania County in the east and with the Mayo River Trail which is being developed in Patrick County to the west. This extensive rails to trails project

will draw travelers from many parts of the nation and will eventually rival in popular usage the Virginia Creeper Trail in Washington County and the New River Trail in Carroll, Wythe, and Pulaski Counties.

4. **Ninth District Tourism Conference Hosted** – Earlier this Fall, I hosted a Ninth District Conference on regional progress in tourism development, attended by more than 300 participants. Conference attendees received presentations from a series of exceptional speakers who offered extensive information on local 9th District community tourism successes and the tremendous potential that the tourism economy holds for our region. Insights were provided on tourism strategies that are working today in Southwest Virginia.

5. **Construction Begins On Cranesnest Trail in Dickenson County** – Using \$500,000 in federal funding I acquired 2 years ago, construction began in November on the new Cranesnest Trail in Dickenson County. The 23 mile trail will lead from Route 83 to the John Flannagan Reservoir, highlighting an area in Dickenson County rich in both natural beauty and historical significance. The trail will accommodate the activities of hiking, biking, and horseback riding and will significantly enhance the tourism economy of Dickenson County.

6. **High Knob Horse Trails Nears Construction Start** - In 2005 I obtained federal funding to construct horse trails at High Knob in Scott and Wise Counties. My goal is to create recreational opportunities that will draw more visitors to one of Southwest Virginia's most scenic and unique natural assets, and provide economic benefits to the surrounding region. The U.S. Forest Service, working with representatives of the Scott County Regional Horse Association, has now identified locations for the horse trails, as well as sites for trail heads, parking lots and restrooms. The environmental review process for the project will be complete by the end of January 2008, and ground will be broken for construction in the early spring. Construction is expected to take one year. The project will complement the Scott County Horse Park at Dungannon and is expected to attract many additional horse enthusiasts from surrounding states with attendant economic benefits to the region.

7. **Funds Provided For Trail Enhancements in Wise and Scott** -A \$40,000 grant is being provided at my request for the rehabilitation of the Chief Bengé Scout Trail in Scott and Wise Counties. The 24 mile trail traverses ecologically diverse portions of the Jefferson National Forest from atop High Knob in Wise County to Little Stony Falls in Scott County, and is used by hikers,

bicyclists and horseback riders. Originally constructed in the 1960s, the trail has become degraded with age and is in need of rehabilitation. The funding I have obtained will allow a bridge to be constructed along the trail and enable erosion remediation efforts to commence. These improvements will encourage increased use of the trail by visitors and will enhance the tourism economy of Scott and Wise Counties as well as the City of Norton

C. ENCOURAGING SMALL BUSINESS FORMATION

Locally owned small businesses confer tremendous benefits on our economy and help to create thousands of good jobs in our region. Profits from small businesses remain in the community, and the presence of small businesses helps to protect against over-reliance on a single company or economic sector. For these reasons, creating a climate that is favorable to small business startups and providing resources for small business owners to grow and expand their enterprise is an important part of our strategy for promoting economic growth throughout our region. In 2007 these efforts advanced:

- 1. Nanotechnology Industry To Emerge in Pulaski County** - At my urging, federal grant funds in the amount \$272,000 have been provided for the planning of a regional, multi-tenant, nanotechnology business park facility in the Town of Pulaski. Several nanotechnology firms are already present in the New River Valley, and the funding I have obtained will aid the attraction of additional firms and industries which create or utilize nanotechnology products.
- 2. Alleghany County/City of Covington Business Incubator** – Two years ago I encouraged Alleghany County and City of Covington officials to develop a small business incubator, which will serve both the county and the city. A favorable feasibility study has recently been completed for the development of the project, and in 2008 I will be taking additional steps to bring the incubator to Alleghany County.
- 3. Additional Small Business Incubators Planned** – Hundreds of jobs have been created in Pulaski, Tazewell, Montgomery, Washington, and Grayson Counties and the City of Galax through small incubators. The presence of incubators in our region assures that technical assistance and the opportunity to reduce start-up costs are available to each person who wants to bring his or her good ideas to the commercial market. We are now working to establish small business incubator facilities in Wythe, Buchanan, and Dickenson Counties. Discussions are underway about the prospects for facilities in other counties as well.

- 4. House Approves Funding for Small Business Development in Alleghany County** - The U.S. House of Representatives has approved legislation at my request, which provides \$231,000 in federal funding to advance economic development and small business planning in Alleghany County. The funding will enable the development of business assistance software, which will be used by existing and prospective businesses in the Alleghany Highlands to formulate business plans, obtain financing, and provide access to other necessary resources. Because the software will be shared by all businesses in the Alleghany Highlands, the funding will greatly reduce the expenses individual businesses would ordinarily have to incur in order to access the business planning resources individually.
- 5. New Revolving Loan Program Created for Southwest Virginia Businesses** - Nearly \$450,000 in federal funds have been provided at my request for the establishment of a new intermediary relending program which will provide loans to small businesses in communities in Southwest Virginia with less than 25,000 residents. The loan programs will be administered by Virginia Community Capital's office in Christiansburg. Low-interest loans of up \$75,000 will be used by small businesses to purchase equipment, inventory, or working capital.
- 6. Revolving Loan Fund Established for Small Businesses in Carroll County** - A \$32,426 federal grant has been awarded at my urging to the Carroll County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) to establish a micro-enterprise revolving loan fund which will provide low interest loans to small and emerging businesses in Carroll County which would otherwise be unable to obtain funding assistance.
- 7. Enterprise Fair Hosted** - Earlier this year, I hosted an Enterprise Fair at Dabney Lancaster Community College in Clifton Forge, which offered prospective and current small business owners in our region expert advice from leading Virginia business organizations on how to expand their businesses. The Fair was well attended, and participants obtained information helpful to their business advancement on topics such as preparing a business plan, accounting, marketing, and financing.
- 8. People, Incorporated** - A \$200,000 federal grant recently made at my request will be used by People Incorporated to augment its existing revolving loan fund which provides capital to businesses in Lee, Wise, Scott, Dickenson, Buchanan,

Russell, Tazewell, Washington, Smyth, Bland, Wythe, Grayson, Carroll, and Floyd Counties, along with the cities of Bristol, Norton and Galax. Loans of up to \$200,000 from the fund are made to small and emerging businesses to help cover the costs of a variety of business expenses.

9. **NRV Loan Program Receives Federal Boost** – Earlier this year, I obtained a federal grant in the amount of \$50,000 to recapitalize the New River Valley Development Corporation’s (NRVDC) small business lending fund. The fund provides low-interest loans to both existing and new businesses now residing in or newly locating in Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski Counties and the City of Radford. Start up companies resident in The New River Valley Competitiveness Center small business incubator have been significant beneficiaries of the fund in past years. As the borrowed funds are repaid to the IDA with interest, the loan fund will grow, and additional small business will benefit from the loan program.

D. EXPANDING OUR TELECOMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITIES

One of my priorities is to ensure that every community in Southwest Virginia has the telecommunications infrastructure needed to compete successfully in the contest for new job creation in the 21st Century. The deployment of broadband holds great promise for our region, enabling localities to attract new companies offering technology-based jobs, while aiding locally-owned small businesses that have broadband access needs. Today, I am pleased to note that many of the communities in our region are making great strides in the deployment of broadband networks.

1. **Broadband Services Extended In Coalfield Region** –Earlier this Summer, I was pleased to participate in the lighting of two major fiber-optic backbones which are now delivering high-speed Internet access to communities throughout much of our coal-producing region. 206 miles of high capacity fiber optic cabling was deployed through Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Tazewell and Wise Counties, with the benefit of \$4.6 million in grant funds I secured through the U. S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration. The Virginia Tobacco Commission matched the federal grant funds. The broadband services that are now available through this project represent a major step forward in our efforts to attract technology based high paying jobs to Southwest Virginia’s coal producing counties.

2. **Funding Obtained to Expand Broadband in Buchanan & Dickenson Counties** - At my request, the U.S. Department of Commerce, has provided an additional federal grant in the amount of \$1,550,000 to bring high-speed Internet access to more areas in Buchanan and Dickenson Counties. The federal funding will enable the extension of the Cumberland Plateau fiber optic backbone from Vansant to Clintwood, bringing high-speed Internet services to business along the route of the fiber in the communities of Haysi, Clinchco, and Fremont. The funding will also enable the extension of broadband service to the Lover's Gap industrial park which is now under construction in Buchanan County, as well as to the Dickenson County Technology Park, providing essential infrastructure to attract businesses and encourage industrial development in these locations.
3. **Wise WiFi** – Free high-speed wireless Internet services have now been established in the Town of Wise, which will help bridge the gap between the UVA Wise college campus and students and educators living in downtown Wise. Visitors to Wise will also be able to access the network, and the availability of high-speed Internet access at no cost will be an attractive feature to many travelers. In following years, the wireless network will be further deployed, and under current plans eventually all of Wise County will be able to access the Internet by wireless means. The wireless network is receiving its Internet signal through the federally funded LENOWISCO fiber optic backbone.
4. **St. Charles Broadband** - Nearly \$600,000 in federal grant funding is being provided at my request for the establishment of high-speed Internet access in the St. Charles community of Lee County. The federal funds will be used to deploy fiber optic lines across the “last mile” to homes and businesses. This funding will also provide free broadband service for two years for the St. Charles Elementary School, the St. Charles Fire Department and the Rescue Squad, as well as three Stone Mountain Health Clinics: St. Charles Community Health Clinic, St. Charles Respiratory Care (Black Lung) Clinic, and St. Charles Dental Clinic. In addition to the broadband services which will become available, the grant will be used to purchase 10 new computer workstations for the St. Charles Community Center, which will provide high-speed Internet access to library patrons.
5. **Rose Hill Broadband** – This Summer, I was pleased to join with officials from Lee County in formally lighting the new Rose Hill Fiber Optic Network, a project which has enabled the provision of affordable high-speed Internet access and other advanced communications to 150 households and businesses

in the Rose Hill community. A \$500,000 federal grant, which I secured from the Rural Development Agency was used to deploy more than 5 miles of fiber optic lines, wiring individual homes and businesses throughout the Town and establishing a computer laboratory and public Internet access site at the Rose Hill Public Library.

6. **Bland County Receives Federal Funds to Expand High-Speed Wireless Network** - A federal grant in the amount of \$99,000 has been provided at my urging for the expansion of the high-speed wireless Internet network in Bland County. The funding will be used to extend the existing high-speed wireless service from the Town of Bland north along I-77 to the communities of Rocky Gap and Bastian. Residents and businesses in these communities will be able to connect to the network wirelessly, greatly reducing the cost of delivering high speed Internet services.

7. **Cleveland Broadband Advances** – The Cleveland Fiber Optic Network in Russell County is now being launched with federal monies I acquired last year in the amount of \$220,650. Fiber optic lines deployed to homes and businesses will soon bring broadband services to the entire community. In addition, a new public Internet access site has been established at the Town Hall, and 10 computer workstations with broadband access are now available for use without charge for Russell County residents. High speed Internet service will also be extended to the Cleveland Police Department, Cleveland Volunteer Fire Department, and Cleveland Elementary School .

8. **Fries Cell Tower Activated** -At my request, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has approved the activation of the Fries cellular telephone tower which has enabled the provision of cell phone service for the Town of Fries. A controversy over compliance by the cell phone company with a law protecting historical resources delayed use of the tower from the time of its construction until late in the year. I have worked closely with the FCC and the company offering the cell phone services in order to clear the way for Fries to have cell service.

9. **Ask Abingdon** – Earlier this year, I was pleased to participate in the launch of Ask Abingdon, a new cutting edge e-government program which is now providing streamlined interactive services and information for all Town of Abingdon residents. This state-of-the art system is making it easier for those living in Abingdon to request general town services and to receive helpful information on

a wide variety of topics of interest, such as school closures, road construction, and meeting notices. The effort to create interactive e-government solutions for Town of Abingdon residents began in July, 2001 when at my urging, the State of Virginia provided \$100,000 for the Town to acquire the high capacity servers required to host the new service. The Ask Abingdon software was developed by a firm in Blacksburg that serves municipal governments nationwide.

E. INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT

- 1. \$24 Million Builds 9th District Water and Wastewater Systems** - In 2007, more than \$24 million in federal funding was awarded at my urging to construct and improve drinking water systems and public wastewater systems throughout the 9th District. Obtaining the federal funding to place publicly provided drinking water in Southwest Virginia homes is a high priority of my office. More than 14,000 Southwest Virginia homes will receive new or improved publicly provided drinking water or sewer service as a result of projects launched with federal funds in 2007. In 2008, I will be seeking a comparable level of federal dollars for further system development.
- 2. Funding in Place to Complete Kim-Stan Cleanup** - At my urging, the Environmental Protection Agency has allocated \$10 million in federal funding from its Superfund Program to complete cleanup efforts at the Kim-Stan landfill in Alleghany County. The funds will be used to construct a vegetation cap system consisting of multiple layers to seal the landfill and prevent the creation of landfill leachate. It is anticipated that work on the vegetation cap will begin in the Spring of next year and take approximately 18 months to complete. Earlier phases of the project expanded the wastewater treatment plant in Low Moor and constructed a leachate discharge line from the landfill to the treatment plant.
- 3. Galax-Carroll Wastewater Agreement Signed** - Recently, I was pleased to join with officials from Carroll County and the City of Galax to mark the signing of an agreement which will enable construction on the federally funded Woodlawn sewer project to proceed. This expansion of wastewater infrastructure along the Route 58 corridor west of Interstate 77 in Carroll County will provide new wastewater service to more than 155 households, businesses and schools and will be an impetus for new economic growth in Carroll County.
- 4. Konnarock School** - I recently visited Smyth County to take part in a transfer

of title event which will enable the restoration of the historic Konnarock Lutheran Girls School. The U.S. Congress had previously approved legislation I sponsored which allowed the Forest Service to convey the school property at the junction of Routes 600 and 603 in Konnarock, to the Evangelical Lutheran Coalition for Mission in Appalachia. Now that the formal transfer has taken place, plans are underway to restore the school consistent with its historic status, and convert it into a retreat center for use by non-profit and faith based organizations, as well as an environmental learning center.

5. **Spencer Penn School** – A federal grant in the amount of \$13,750 has been provided at my request for the purchase of playground equipment for the Spencer-Penn Centre in Henry County. The Centre is a multi-use community facility for area residents and houses a variety of educational programs and recreational activities such as computer classes, writing workshops, and a daycare center. These activities accompany an attractive adaptive reuse of the Spencer Penn School.
6. **Return to Roots** – I recently obtained a federal grant in the amount of \$50,000 to help launch the second phase of Return to Roots. This innovative program provides individuals who have Southwest Virginia ties and an interest in returning to the region with information regarding career opportunities in the area, as well as other resources they might require when relocating to one of our localities. Prior to the award of this grant Return to Roots served only the western portion of the Ninth District. The second phase of will reach businesses and individuals in Bland, Giles, Wythe, Pulaski, Grayson, Carroll, Floyd, and Montgomery Counties, through targeted advertising and a state-of-the-art website.
7. **Federal Funds Provided to Combat Illegal Drugs** - I have obtained two federal grants from the U.S. Department of Justice in the total amount of \$780,000 to fight the manufacture, distribution, and use of illegal drugs in the region. The funds will be used to provide law enforcement officials in our area with additional equipment for use in drug raids and arrests, resources for intelligence gathering, as well as technical assistance.
8. **Southwest Virginia First Responders Receive Federal Funding**- During 2007, I participated with a number of Ninth District fire departments, rescue squads and police and sheriffs departments in the successful effort to obtain more than \$2 million in federal assistance for the purchase of new equipment.

- ***Local Police and Sheriffs Departments Receive Federal Assistance:*** Numerous police and sheriffs offices throughout Southwest Virginia received federal funding to purchase new law enforcement vehicles and equipment to improve safety for officers and residents of the region. The Clintwood, St. Paul, Town of Wise, Gate City, City of Galax, and Town of Pulaski Police Departments and the Lee, Buchanan, and Wythe County Sheriff's offices were awarded funding which will aid in the purchase of new vehicles, as well as radios and safety equipment.
- ***Rescue Squads Receive Federal Boost:*** Three area rescue squads received federal funding to purchase new vehicles and equipment. The Wise County Rescue Squad, Chilhowie Rescue Squad, and Lebanon Life Saving Crew received federal funding to purchase new ambulances and related equipment.
- ***Communities Receive Federal Assistance for Fire Departments:*** During 2007, I participated with a number of Ninth District fire departments in the successful effort to obtain federal assistance for the purchase of new fire trucks and equipment. Local fire departments which received federal grant funding include: Paint Bank, Richlands, Coeburn, Saltville, Galax, Rural Retreat, Ft. Blackmore, Independence, Ararat, Elk Creek, Fairystone, Clintwood, Narrows, Gate City, Thomas Walker, Iron Gate, Chilhowie, Fries, and Mt. Rogers.

F. FARM ECONOMY SUPPORTED

1. **Hair Sheep Industry Grows** – I recently joined with members of the Scott County Hair Sheep Association in marking the achievement of a major benchmark for sales of locally grown lamb. In 2003, I encouraged a major area grocery retailer to consider supporting the emerging local hair sheep industry, which promised substantial economic benefits for Southwest Virginia farmers. The retailer entered into an agreement to market locally raised lamb, and local sheep producers have now been paid more than \$1 million by the grocery chain. The effort to encourage the growth of this local industry began with a Ninth Congressional District Conference I hosted, which offered information on how farmers in our region could take advantage of this growing market.
2. **Funding Obtained for Grayson Landcare** – Earlier this year, I obtained a federal grant in the amount of \$116,020, which will help farmers and landowners in

Grayson, Carroll, Floyd, and Wythe Counties further the establishment of rural businesses based on livestock production and forestry. Through a cooperative effort, farmers and local landowners in these areas will work to create a diverse array of business opportunities, such as forestry and value added beef production, so that families who wish to continue making a living from their farms and lands can continue to do so to their own benefit and to the benefit of their communities. Local working groups will be convened to generate business models, share best practices, and secure investment capital, which will ultimately help farmers and landowners increase their incomes through improved management and increased market access opportunities.

- 3. Federal Government Provides Disaster Assistance** – At my urging, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture has declared a federal disaster in Southwest Virginia due to the recent drought conditions. As a result of the declaration, farmers in Southwest Virginia who suffered crop losses caused by the drought have been eligible to receive financial assistance from the federal government. Additionally, farmers in Patrick, Henry, Floyd, Wythe, Pulaski Grayson, and Carroll Counties and the City of Galax who have suffered crop losses due to the freeze which occurred in April are also eligible for federal assistance.

G. EDUCATION: PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION

- 1. Virginia Tech Counseling Receives Federal Support** – As part of the effort to ensure that the needs of the Virginia Tech Community are being met in the wake of the April tragedy, I recently encouraged the award of a \$960,685 grant from the U.S. Department of Education, which will assist with ongoing recovery efforts on campus. Many of those in the Virginia Tech community affected by the tragedy are at different stages of recovery and have unique needs going forward. The funding will help the University reach out to students, faculty, and staff at the school who may be in need of mental health services, and assist them in finding an appropriate provider. This effort will also serve as a model which can be employed by other institutions of higher learning in a time of similar need.
- 2. Federal Funds Advance Health Care Training Programs** – A federal grant in the amount of \$2 million has been provided at my request to expand health-care training programs at community colleges in our region. Southwest Virginia healthcare providers are currently facing a labor shortage and are often unable

to fill vacant positions in specialized healthcare fields. The grant funds will allow Mountain Empire Community College, Southwest Virginia Community College, Virginia Highlands Community College, and Wytheville Community College to implement new degree programs in the healthcare fields most in need of highly-skilled workers. Students interested in employment in fields from nursing to radiology will now have access to a significant new professional development opportunity.

3. **Export Markets For Locally Produces Goods and Services Explored** – At my request, the U.S. Department of Education is providing a federal grant in the amount of \$80,000 to the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon to advance its Global Southwest Virginia program. The program will encourage students and small businesses to explore new overseas markets through international business and cultural education. Students and mid-career professionals participating in Global Southwest Virginia will discover export opportunities for Southwest Virginia services and goods, such as coal mining equipment and forest products, to markets in China through specialty business seminars from area business leaders and experts in international trade.
4. **Mountain Empire Community College** – Nearly \$100,000 in federal grant funds has been provided to Mountain Empire Community College, at my request, for the purchase and installation of equipment for the school's new Electro-Mechanical Technology program. Participation in the program will provide students with the skills needed for employment at Eastman Chemical, which will soon need to hire approximately 1600 technical workers due to impending retirements, as well as other similar industries in the region.
5. **Federal Funding Adds New Degree Program at SWVCC** – At my urging, the Appalachian Regional Commission has provided a federal grant in the amount of \$100,000 to Southwest Virginia Community College for the purchase of equipment for the school's new medical technology lab. The presence of this state-of-the-art laboratory facility on the SWVCC campus will allow the school to offer a new degree program in the field of Medical Laboratory Technology. Students will use the lab to gain hands-on experience, which will be supplemented through additional training at local hospitals.
6. **Montgomery County Schools** – At my request, the U.S. Department of Education has provided a federal grant in the amount of \$419,411 to Montgomery County public schools, which will allow 230 Montgomery County teachers to

participate in an intensive professional development program through Virginia Tech. The program will help teachers offer new lesson plans to their classes, improve their teaching strategies, and boost the overall level of achievement of Montgomery County students in the area of American history.

7. **New Mentoring Program for Tazewell County Students** – A federal grant I obtained from the U.S. Department of Education in the amount of \$121,063 is allowing Mountain Kids Incorporated to launch a new after school mentoring program, which will offer Tazewell County students assistance with school work and career planning. The funds will be used to train local adults and outstanding high-school students to serve as mentors to Tazewell County middle schools students who are in need of extra assistance.
8. **Ninth District Education Conference** –In April, I hosted a Ninth Congressional District Education Conference, to explore the best methods to prepare Southwest Virginia’s workforce for 21st Century employment. The Conference focused on the highly successful Patrick County Education Foundation Model, which has been credited with attracting new businesses, and helping residents to earn more competitive wages. Positive discussions are now underway about the formation of additional similar projects in other 9th District localities.

H. TRANSPORTATION: THE LINK TO A BROADER ECONOMY

1. **Grundy Flood and Highway Redevelopment Project Advances** – The U.S. House of Representatives has approved legislation at my request to provide an additional \$3 million for the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment Project. The funding will be used in 2008 to finish construction of a ring wall, which will protect the courthouse and existing downtown area from future floods, complete the levee/ring wall tie-in, and to fund voluntary flood proofing and acquisition projects. This most recent award brings to \$90.3 million the total federal investment in the project to date. Construction on the final three major elements of the project, including the Route 460 Bypass is well under way. The completed project will bring a broad new economic lift to the Town of Grundy and Buchanan County.
2. **Improving the Ninth District’s Airports** – The presence of well-developed airports is an essential tool in attracting new employers to the region. In 2007, the following successes were achieved in improving the Ninth District’s airports:

- ***Tazewell County Airport:*** At my request, the Federal Aviation Administration is providing two federal grants totaling \$2,017,168, which will be used to remove obstacles along the approach path at the Tazewell County Airport and will allow use of the Airport during inclement weather periods. The resulting increase in air traffic at the Airport will have a positive effect on our region's economic development.
- ***Virginia Tech/Montgomery Regional Airport:*** I recently obtained a federal grant in the amount of \$2.1 million from the Department of Transportation, which will allow the Virginia Tech/Montgomery Regional Airport Authority to expand the Airport apron where aircraft are parked. The new apron will allow the airport to accommodate additional corporate aircraft, an ability which is essential in the showcasing of our area to prospective new businesses.
- ***New River Valley Airport:*** The Federal Aviation Administration, at my urging, has provided a \$600,000 grant for the rehabilitation of the apron at the New River Valley airport. The repairs to the apron will allow greater use of the airport by businesses engaging in international trade in the region. Last year, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security approved my request to officially designate the New River Valley Airport as a federally funded "Port of Entry," enabling the Airport to receive annual federal funding to finance the costs of operating and maintaining the Customs Office located there. Previously, those costs were met with funding from the localities served by the airport.

II. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

As co-founder and current co-chairman of the Congressional Internet Caucus and as a senior member of the Committees on Energy and Commerce and the Judiciary, I am extensively involved in the development of federal policy for telecommunications, intellectual property and the Internet. In 2007, these policy initiatives included:

- Universal Service Reform** – I have introduced legislation to update and ensure the sustainability of the Universal Service Fund (USF), which keeps local telephone service affordable in rural and other hard to serve areas of the nation. A variety of new providers of voice services which are exempt from making payments into the USF have entered the market, resulting in greater USF funding

burdens being placed on traditional service providers. My measure responds to these developments. It broadens the base of contributions into the fund, controls distributions from the fund and allows use of the fund for broadband deployment.

- B. Municipal Broadband Act** – I recently authored legislation to encourage the deployment of networks offering high speed Internet access in rural areas, by preserving the ability of local governments to offer community broadband services. New wireless technologies now permit the offering of high speed Internet access at truly affordable costs. Using these new low cost wireless technologies, local governments have a role to play in speeding broadband deployment. If commercial broadband providers are not willing to deploy in particular areas due to low population density, local governments should be able to step in and fill the gap. And yet in many states, local governments are barred from this market or must offer broadband service subject to unrealistic restrictions. My legislation will preserve the ability of local governments to offer community broadband infrastructure and services to their citizens by prohibiting States from barring their ability to do so.
- C. Fair Use Act** – I introduced legislation early in the year backed by a broad coalition of consumer groups and technology companies to preserve the ability of consumers to use digital media in their homes in the manner most convenient to them. Many of the uses that consumers make in the home environment of music, movies or other entertainment programs, such as recordings for purely personal use, do not violate copyright law. However, a law passed in 1998 took away many of these personal use rights for material delivered in a protected digital format. The legislation which I have drafted restores the traditional personal use rights to consumers who lawfully acquire copyrighted works.
- D. New Congressional Caucus Launched** – Earlier this year, I founded the Congressional Digital Television (DTV) Caucus to help educate the public about the impending switch from analog to digital television broadcasting, scheduled for February 17, 2009. The caucus will provide helpful information to analog television viewers about the steps they need to take in order to enjoy the benefits of digital television, and keep their televisions working when the transition takes place.
- E. Congressional Internet Initiative Continues to Grow** – With a membership of more than 180 U.S. Representatives and Senators, the bi-partisan, bi-cameral

Internet Caucus, which I co-founded in 1996 and now-co-chair, has become the most active caucus in the Congress. It is an increasingly valuable educational forum as Congress addresses a range of policy issues related to the Internet.

IV. 2007 LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

- A. Energy and Air Quality Subcommittee** -At the beginning of this Congress I was chosen by my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to serve as the Chairman of the Energy and Air Quality Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. The Subcommittee's jurisdiction includes national energy policy and the Clean Air Act. As Chairman, I am uniquely positioned to develop energy policy with the views of Southwest Virginia's industries such as coal and agriculture at the forefront. This year our agenda largely focused on a multi-faceted strategy for promoting American energy independence and on the Congressional response to climate change. That work will continue in 2008.
- B. House Approves Energy Legislation** – The Energy and Air Quality Subcommittee wrote landmark energy legislation earlier this year, which was adopted by the U.S. House of Representatives in August. The legislation contains a number of provisions to strengthen energy efficiency, promote the use of home grown fuels, and advance American energy independence. The efficiency standards contained in the legislation will greatly reduce energy costs to consumers and remove as much as 10 billion tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by 2030, more than the annual emissions of all of the cars on the road in America today. The legislation also provides assistance for the production of flex-fuel vehicles that run on renewable fuel, encourages the production of plug-in hybrid vehicles, and increases the amount of grants for cellulosic ethanol production to \$1 billion.
- C. Responding to Climate Change** – My Subcommittee is currently crafting the nation's first mandatory greenhouse gas control program in response to global climate change. The legislation we will produce will make a substantial contribution to lessening greenhouse gases emissions, while not dislocating any economic sector. Our goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions between 60 and 80 percent by 2050 through a cap and trade system. In the coming year we will we will seek the approval of this measure in the U.S. House and Senate, and present it to the President for his signature.

- D. House Passes Free Flow of Information Act** – The U.S. House of Representatives has recently approved, by a vote of 398-21, the Free Flow of Information Act, legislation I authored to protect reporters from being compelled to reveal their confidential news sources in federal court proceedings. The passage of the bill is a major victory for the public’s right to know and for the ability of reporters to bring important information on highly sensitive issues to light. The assurance of confidentiality that reporters give to sources is fundamental to their ability to deliver news on highly contentious matters of broad public interest, such as corruption in government or misdeeds in corporations. Without the promise of confidentiality, many inside sources would not reveal the information, and the opportunity to take corrective action to address the harms would not arise. The passage of this legislation underpins our nation’s tradition of honoring press freedom as a hallmark of our open and informed society. I am now working to obtain Senate approval of the bill.
- E. Virginia Ridge and Valley Act Approved** – The U.S. House of Representatives has approved the Virginia Ridge and Valley Act of 2007, legislation I authored which will create in the 9th District new Wilderness Areas and new National Scenic Areas and will expand six existing Wilderness Areas in portions of Bland, Craig, Grayson, Giles, Lee, Montgomery and Smyth Counties within the Jefferson National Forest. Wilderness designation enables the U.S. Forest Service to preserve the scenic and undisturbed character of the landscape while accommodating a wide range of recreational activities. The legislation will protect our natural heritage while enhancing the tourism economy of the region by enticing travelers to visit and enjoy the protected and untouched landscape which Southwest Virginia has to offer.
- F. Virginia Tech Memorial Fund Tax Exemption**- Earlier this month, the President signed into law legislation I authored which will exempt from federal taxation payments made from the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund to victims of the Virginia Tech tragedy and their family members. In the days immediately following the tragedy of April 16, 2007, Virginia Tech established the Fund as the vehicle to accept the numerous financial contributions being made in support of the Virginia Tech community during its time of greatest need. In October, Virginia Tech distributed the payments from the Fund to the families of the deceased victims and the injured students. Now that the funds have been dispensed, the law I have authored enables the entirely appropriate step of exempting these payments from federal income taxation to be taken.

- G. Legislation Introduced to Promote the Use of Coal-to-Liquids Technology** – Earlier this year, I introduced legislation to promote the use of coal-to-liquids, a technology which enables the production of transportation fuels from coal. The legislation I’ve authored would establish price certainty, thereby incenting investments in coal to liquids facilities. Coal liquefaction has been in use since World War II, and South Africa today uses the technology to produce approximately 40 percent of its transportation fuels. By using one of our nation’s most abundant natural resources - coal - to produce transportation fuels, we can address fuel cost concerns, make our nation less reliant on imports from politically unstable regions of the world and simultaneously benefit our domestic coal industry.
- H. Alleghany Cemetery** – In August, I introduced legislation which will convey an 8-acre tract of federal land containing a cemetery located in Alleghany County to the Central Advent Christian Church in Clifton Forge. The Church has been operating the cemetery since 1941 through a Special Use Permit granted by the U.S. Forest Service. Given the Church’s desire to appropriately maintain the cemetery and the fact that the U.S. Forest Service has no alternative plans to use the property, the conveyance is in the interest of all parties.

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