

CONGRESSMAN
Rick Boucher



Ninth District
Virginia

Annual Congressional Activities
Report for 2008



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

December 2008

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 and advancing the telecommunications network.

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 real time 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.

For current information on my Congressional activities, please visit my website at www.boucher.house.gov.

Sincerely,

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

RICK BOUCHER
Member of Congress

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THE DTV TRANSITION?

On February 17, 2009, the nation will undergo a change in the way television broadcasting is transmitted over the air. On that date, television stations will terminate broadcasting analog signals, which are the current predominant method of transmitting television signals throughout the United States. Thereafter, the new method of television broadcasting signals will be digital (DTV). The DTV Transition will provide television viewers with clearer pictures and more program choices and will free up major portions of the airwaves for public safety communications such as police, fire and rescue, and for new broadband wireless services. With February 17, 2009 only a few months away, I am encouraging all Southwest Virginians to test their preparedness for the DTV transition now.

If your television is connected to cable or satellite, you are fully prepared for the DTV transition. Your service provider will make sure that your television set receives a viewable picture after the transition.

If you have a digital TV you are ready for the transition. If you do not know whether you have an analog or digital television, you should consult your owner's manual or check to see if it is labeled with words indicating it is digital such as DTV, ATSC, Digital Input, Digital Tuner Built-In, Digital Receive Built-In, Integrated Digital Tuner, Integrated Digital Receiver or HDTV; however, if your television is labeled Digital Monitor, HDTV Monitor, Digital Ready or HDTV Ready, it may not be a digital television.

If you watch television with an analog TV set and get your signal by rabbit ears or an outdoor antenna, you will need a digital to analog converter box and may need a new antenna or an adjustment to your present antenna to continue receiving a signal after the DTV transition.

The federal government has a program to help pay for the converter boxes. They are available for sale in retail electronics products stores and cost between \$50 and \$70. All U.S. households may receive up to two \$40 coupons to go toward the purchase of up to two digital-to-analog converter boxes. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), a federal government agency, is in charge of the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program. To request a coupon or for further information on the coupons, consumers can apply online at www.dtv2009.org or call the 24 hour hotline at 1-888-DTV-2009. It is important to note that the converter box coupons expire 90 days from the date they are sent to you.

Your analog television set should continue to work as before without the converter box when used as a monitor for gaming consoles, VCRs, DVD players and similar products.

If you connect your converter box and it is not working, an antenna adjustment or a new antenna may be necessary. It is also important to note that digital stations may be on different channel numbers than analog stations.

In view of the fact that antenna adjustments and new antenna installations may take some time, it's a good idea to address transition needs now rather than waiting until the last minute.

All TV stations are currently transmitting both analog and digital signals, providing an immediate opportunity for determining if your present equipment configuration will be adequate to receive digital transmissions or will require some adjustment.

For additional information about the DTV Transition and what you may need to do to prepare for it, visit the Federal Communications Commission's website <http://www.dtv.gov/> or call 1-888-225-5322 .You can also request additional information about the DTV transition by visiting my website <http://www.boucher.house.gov/> or by calling my Abingdon office at 276-628-1145.

I.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: MY TOP PRIORITY

A. BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR 21ST CENTURY INDUSTRY

In 2008, we enjoyed broad success in the attraction of federal funds to expand high speed Internet access and construct business and technology parks complete with the infrastructure of water and wastewater facilities and greenways desired by the technology based companies that are increasingly locating in our region. The high paying jobs these companies offer are boosting our economy by creating opportunities for Southwest Virginians to remain in the region rather than seek employment commensurate with their skills elsewhere.

1. **Technology Parks in Pulaski, Bland and Scott Receive Basic Infrastructure Funding:**
 - a. **More Than \$3 Million In Federal Funding Will Provide Water and Wastewater Services to Pulaski County's Commerce Park:** A federal grant of more than \$3 million provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce will install a water and wastewater system of sufficient size to support major industrial development at the regionally operated Commerce Park near Dublin. Currently, inadequate water and wastewater facilities are an impediment to development at the Park.
 - b. **Federal Funding Secured for New Bland Commerce Park:** The U.S. Department of Commerce has provided a \$600,000 federal grant for the development of a new Commerce Park near Bastian in Bland County. With the federal funding, the site will be graded and a water and wastewater system will be installed throughout the park. It is estimated that an initial 135 jobs will be created as a result of the creation of the Park.
 - c. **Federal Grant Will Improve Access to Duffield Technology Park:** The Appalachian Regional Commission has provided a federal grant of \$247,747 to construct and pave an access road one-half mile in length from U.S. Route 58 to the Crooked Road Technology Center in the Scott County Regional Business and Technology Park. The Technology Center is being designed to attract technology and research and development companies, and early success in industrial recruitment efforts is being achieved.
2. **Expanding Our Region's Telecommunications Capabilities:** One of my priorities is to assure that every Southwest Virginia community has the telecommunications infrastructure required to compete successfully for technology based job creation. The deployment of high speed Internet access capabilities

throughout the region is not only essential to attracting new companies but also boosts our existing base of businesses. In 2008, we made great progress:

- a. **Federal Funding Expands High-Speed Internet Access to Communities in Scott, Lee, Dickenson, Bland and Tazewell Counties:** For the last several years, I have hosted a series of workshops to inform local governments and Internet service providers of federal funding possibilities for new broadband networks. As a result of the workshops, communities throughout the Ninth District have been successful in seeking highly competitive federal grant funds to expand high-speed Internet access. I am pleased to report that this year the Ninth District is receiving more federal broadband grants than any other Congressional district in the nation. In 2009, the communities of Trammel, Mechanicsburg, Tannersville, Blackwater and Yuma will be receiving high-speed Internet access services as a result of 5 federal grants totaling nearly \$3.5 million.

- b. **Nearly \$100,000 in Federal Funds Will Develop Russell County Wireless Network:** A federal grant of \$99,000 has been awarded to Russell County to develop wireless, high-speed Internet access throughout the county. The Internet services will be available at affordable prices for Russell County residents in Castlewood, St. Paul, Honaker, Hansonville, Rosedale, Lebanon and Green Valley.

- c. **\$220,000 in Federal Funds Deploy Fiber Optic Line To Cleveland Community:** Earlier this year, I joined with officials in the Town of Cleveland to formally launch high-speed Internet access services to homes and businesses in the Town. A federal grant of \$220,000 provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture has been used by a local cable company to deploy more than 20 miles of fiber optic lines from a main cable facility in Castlewood to the Town of Cleveland.

B. SHOWCASING SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

In 2008, my Showcasing Southwest Virginia program focused on the attraction of information technology, health care, alternative energy and light manufacturing companies. I hosted 12 tours for corporate executives of well known companies who visited the Ninth District at my invitation during the year. Five of the tours were for companies considering our region for the location of data centers with high capital investment and superior wages. The attraction of these companies will be a continuing priority in 2009.

C. ENCOURAGING SMALL BUSINESS FORMATION

Locally owned small businesses confer tremendous benefits on our economy. 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 expand their enterprises is a key part of our strategy for promoting economic growth throughout the region.

1. U.S. Navy Mentor-Protégé Agreement Will Create 30 Jobs in Montgomery

County: In September, I announced an agreement between Lockheed Martin, a top defense contractor, and Montgomery County's Adaptive Technologies, Inc. (ATI) that will bring significant economic development benefits to the New River Valley. ATI is a Blacksburg Research and Development company currently based at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. At the behest of the U.S. Navy, Lockheed Martin is entering into a Mentor-Protégé Agreement with ATI and its affiliate company Aegisound to facilitate the production of hearing protection devices for the Navy's carrier flight deck personnel. The purpose of the Department of Defense Mentor-Protégé Program is to assist small businesses in becoming viable partners and suppliers to the defense industry. As a result of the agreement, Aegisound will develop a new manufacturing facility, and 30 new jobs will be created.

2. \$15 Million in Federal Tax Credits Will Create Jobs in Southwest Virginia:

At my urging, the U.S. Department of the Treasury through its New Market Tax Credit Program is awarding \$15 million in tax credit allocation authority to People Incorporated Financial Services in Abingdon. Investors will provide a total of \$15 million in capital to People Incorporated Financial Services, which will use the funds to make low interest loans to non profit organizations and small businesses for projects which create jobs in the region. The investors will receive a tax credit against their federal income tax equal to 39 cents for each dollar invested. My office has also hosted workshops with local business owners, bankers and local governments in Floyd, Patrick and Alleghany Counties to inform them of the New Market Tax Credit program and the ways in which it can be used to revitalize communities.

3. \$98,400 Will Increase Successful Revolving Loan Fund for Small Businesses in

Scott County: The U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Rural Development Agency is providing a federal grant of \$98,400 to the Scott County Economic Development Authority to provide additional capital for a revolving loan fund which assists the creation and expansion of locally owned small businesses in the county. The grant adds to the revolving loan fund created in 2005, which makes loans in amounts from \$5,000 to \$25,000 to a variety of businesses in Scott County.

D. CREATING JOBS THROUGH OUR REGION'S ENERGY RESOURCES:

Over the coming decades as global warming controls on carbon dioxide become effective, coal using facilities such as power plants will need to capture and sequester in the ground the carbon dioxide (CO₂) that is released from the coal combustion process.

Unmineable coal seams have a potential to be major sequestering sites for CO₂, and using coal seams for this purpose enhances the production of methane from the seams, creating a major economic benefit. In 2008, we took steps to create research and development jobs in our region exploring the vital clean coal technologies which will secure the future use of coal for the nation.

1. Southwest Virginia Hosts Federal Test Which Will Help Secure the Future of Coal:

I recently joined with Virginia Tech to mark a major step on the road to assuring the future of coal nationally when we began the \$4 million test funded by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) which is injecting carbon dioxide into an unmineable coal seam in Russell County. The test is the largest and most prominent project launched in the central Appalachian region to evaluate coal seams as carbon dioxide storage repositories. 1,000 tons of CO₂ are now being injected into a Russell County methane gas well which extends downward into a coal seam. The project will conclude in January 2009 when test results are expected. Following this test, the large scale test will occur, and I am working to have Southwest Virginia selected for the large scale test as well.

2. \$1.8 Million from DOE To be Used to Evaluate Southwest Virginia as Site for Large Scale CO₂ Sequestration Test:

At my urging, the U.S. Department of Energy has provided a federal grant in the amount of \$1.8 million to conduct a feasibility study for a large scale test of carbon dioxide storage in which 100,000 tons of CO₂ will be injected into a coal seam in the region. The large scale test will be a \$100 million project and require the construction of a local research and development center to manage the study.

E. TOURISM: A MAJOR SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

A key focus of my office's economic development agenda is the expansion of Southwest Virginia's tourism economy which has tremendous growth potential. Tourism is an \$18.7 billion industry in Virginia, generating 210,000 jobs statewide and providing \$1.2 billion in state and local taxes for Virginia's communities. With the state's best outdoor experience and most interesting cultural offerings, our region truly has much to attract the traveling public.

1. New Strategies Developed to Attract Visitors to the Region: Communities throughout the Ninth District have developed strategies targeted toward the attraction of visitors to the region, creating new economic opportunities for our local travel industry:

a. Regional Tourism in the Alleghany Highlands is Promoted: With the assistance of a federal grant of \$25,000 provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission, leaders in the Alleghany Highlands have developed a new

regional marketing plan designed to make information more readily available to visitors and attract new visitors to the area. Alleghany County and the City of Covington have worked with the neighboring jurisdictions of Craig, Bath and Highland Counties and the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission to develop a new logo for Virginia's Western Highlands and a website providing detailed information to the public on events and activities in the region.

- b. Communities Form Partnerships to Explore Tourism Economies:** This year, my office has arranged visits for officials from Alleghany County and the Towns of Clifton Forge and Gate City to visit the Town of Marion to discuss its successful tourism development strategies. Community leaders in Marion provided information to the visitors about the efforts they have undertaken to revitalize the downtown area including the renovation of the historic Lincoln Theatre and the production of the nationally televised Song of the Mountains series.
 - c. Grayson County Unveils New Visitor Guide:** In 2006, I joined with the Grayson County Board of Supervisors to announce the creation of a task force of citizens focused on exploring ways in which the quality of life in Grayson County could be enhanced through developing the County's tourism economy. The task force, among other measures, recommended developing a new Visitor Guide for the County, and in July, we unveiled the new guide. The Guide is a 24 page publication describing events, attractions, activities, lodging and dining in the County, and it has been distributed to convenient locations across a broad area where it is available to the visiting public.
- 2. High Knob Well On Its Way to Becoming a Premier Tourist Destination:** It has long been my goal to make the High Knob region of the Jefferson National Forest in Wise and Scott Counties a premier tourist destination for visitors seeking a superior outdoor experience, and in 2008 we took a number of steps to advance this goal:
- a. Efforts to Rebuild High Knob Tower Well Underway:** Following the destruction of the High Knob Observation Tower in October 2007, I announced the formation of a task force to begin the process of rebuilding the tower. During the past year, the non-profit High Knob Enhancement Corporation has been formed as an outgrowth of the task force's activities to manage the effort, and more than \$100,000 has been raised to enable the reconstruction of the tower. In 2009, an architectural firm will be engaged to design the new tower, and construction will begin once the final design has been approved and sufficient funds are in place.

- b. Construction Begins on High Knob Recreation Trails in Scott County:** In 2005, Congress agreed to my request to provide \$600,000 in federal funding to develop a large network of recreation trails for horse riding and other purposes in the High Knob area. The planning, design and environmental review is now complete, and construction began on the new trails in May. Approximately 2.5 miles of new trails will be built, and 5 miles of existing trails will be completely reconstructed. Three new trail heads are being created with parking and restroom facilities. The new trails and associated infrastructure will accommodate thousands of new visitors to the High Knob region, including horseback riders from several neighboring states.

- 3. Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Project Advances:** The Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail was the path trod by thousands of Americans as they made their way from Kingsport through Scott and Lee Counties and across the Cumberland Gap to settle the American West. We are now seeking to highlight the role the Trail played in American history through a range of projects:

 - a. Daniel Boone Interpretative Center Advances:** An Interpretive Center will be constructed with federal funds in Duffield as the focal point of the Daniel Boone Trail project. The funds to build the center are in place, and a groundbreaking is anticipated in 2009. It will offer permanent and changing exhibits as well as educational and interpretive opportunities. The Center will enhance the network of tourism assets in the region, drawing more visitors to the area and keeping them here longer.

 - b. Federal Funding Obtained for Exhibits at the Daniel Boone Interpretive Center:** The U.S. Department of Transportation is providing \$280,000 to design exhibits at the Daniel Boone Interpretive Center. Additional fundraising for displays will soon commence. 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.

 - c. Wilderness Road Blockhouse Interpretive Center Dedicated:** Earlier this year, I joined in the formal dedication of the Wilderness Road Blockhouse Interpretive Center at Natural Tunnel State Park in Scott County. The historic Anderson Blockhouse, originally located in the Wadlow Gap area of the county, was the gathering place for settlers in the late 1700s and early 1800s as they began the long trek westward through the Cumberland Gap. Several years ago, Congress approved my request to provide \$500,000 to build a replica of the Blockhouse at Natural Tunnel State Park. The Blockhouse was completed in 2003, and the members of the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Association were able to use \$200,000 remaining from the federal grant to construct an interpretative center for the Blockhouse on land adjoining it.

4. **Region's Unique History Highlighted:** Our region has a unique history that is being actively promoted to visitors. Several new projects are highlighting this history:
- a. **Funding Secured to Restore Jack's Creek Covered Bridge:** A federal grant of \$220,000 has been provided to make urgently needed repairs to the Jack's Creek Covered Bridge in Woolwine. The bridge will be stabilized, and video surveillance and fire detection systems will be installed. Additionally, the roof of the bridge will be replaced. Each year, Patrick County holds a Covered Bridge Festival to showcase the County's two covered bridges which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which brings hundreds of travelers to the county. The repairs to the bridge will ensure that it can accommodate visitors for years to come.
 - b. **Edith Bolling Wilson Foundation Center Opens:** In October, I was pleased to join Wythe County residents in marking the formal opening of the Edith Bolling Wilson Museum. Edith Bolling Wilson, the second wife of President Woodrow Wilson, was born in the Bolling family home in Wytheville in 1872. The Edith Bolling Wilson birthplace is now home to the museum with exhibits including many belongings from the Bolling home at the time of Edith's birth. The museum will provide an opportunity for local students and visitors to learn about Mrs. Wilson's connection to our region and her important contributions to our nation's history.
 - c. **Bassett Historical Center Receives Federal Boost:** The U.S. Congress has approved a federal appropriation of \$98,000 which will be used to double the size of the Bassett Historical Center. The Center is a branch of the Blue Ridge Public Library that serves as a repository of histories of Bassett and Henry County, manuscripts, and family memorabilia. Visitation to the Center has increased by 125 percent for each of the past five years. With the federal funds, the Center will be able to double the size of its building and add new resources for visitors.
5. **Blue Ridge Parkway Will Celebrate Its 75th Anniversary:** A federal grant of \$304,000 will enhance public awareness of the Blue Ridge Parkway during its 75th Anniversary in 2010. With the benefit of the federal funds, a media campaign will be implemented to invite visitors from around the nation to enjoy the outdoor experience available along the Parkway.

II.

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITIES

A. \$50 MILLION BUILDS NINTH DISTRICT WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS

In 2008, more than \$50 million in federal funding was awarded to construct and improve public water and wastewater systems throughout the Ninth District. Obtaining the federal funding to place publicly provided drinking water in Southwest Virginia homes is a high priority of my office. More than 25,000 homes and businesses will receive new or improved publicly provided drinking water or sewer service as a result of projects launched with federal funds in 2008. In 2009, I will be seeking a comparable level of federal dollars for further water and wastewater development.

B. SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA FIRST RESPONDERS RECEIVE FEDERAL FUNDING

During 2008, I participated with a number of Ninth District fire departments, rescue squads and police and sheriff's departments in the successful effort to obtain more than \$2.5 million in federal assistance for the purchase of new equipment.

1. **Local Police and Sheriff's Departments Receive Federal Assistance:** Numerous police and sheriff's offices throughout the region received federal funding to purchase new law enforcement vehicles and equipment to improve safety for officers and residents of the region. The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office and the Police Departments of Chilhowie, Coeburn, Appalachia and Pound were awarded funding to aid in the purchase of new vehicles, radios and safety equipment.
2. **Rescue Squads Receive Federal Boost:** Two area rescue squads received federal funding to purchase new vehicles and equipment. The Cleveland Lifesaving Crew and the Wythe County Rescue Squad received the federal funds.
3. **Communities Receive Federal Assistance for Fire Departments:** During 2008, a number of Ninth District Fire Departments received federal funding for new fire trucks and other equipment. Local fire departments receiving federal grants include: Haysi, Independence, Fries, Mount Rogers, Nebo, Oakwood, Hillsville, Twin Community, Blacksburg, Appalachia, Bristol, Snowville, Bassett, Chilhowie and Radford.
4. **\$1 Million Federal Grant Will Improve Smyth County Emergency Communications:** The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is providing a grant of \$1 million to Smyth County. The federal funds will enable the implementation of a new emergency communications infrastructure throughout the County. Smyth County will replace 40 vehicle and 205 portable radios currently in use and provide 160 new two-channel pagers to first responders. Additionally, a new communications tower

will be placed near the Smyth-Tazewell County line, which will provide expanded communications capabilities. Currently, each Department employs a different communications system, and with the federal funds, Smyth County will be able to implement a uniform system throughout the County.

5. **Lee County Emergency Services Building Improved:** A \$1.3 million low-interest federal loan has improved emergency services in Lee County. The funds provided the total cost of the renovation of the former Department of Social Services space to house a state-of-the-art emergency services center.

C. **FEDERAL GRANT WILL PROVIDE NEW HOME FOR ABINGDON BRANCH OF SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK:** Two federal loans totaling nearly \$2 million will enable the Second Harvest Food Bank to purchase and equip a new home for its Appalachian Branch headquartered in Abingdon. The current building which houses the Food Bank is of insufficient size to meet the demand for services in the region. With the federal funds, the Food Bank will purchase, renovate and equip a new building with sufficient storage space, shipping areas and office space to meet its needs. Additionally, with the new building, the Food Bank branch will be able to expand its services beyond its current 11 county area.

D. **NEW CELL PHONE TOWER WILL PROVIDE SERVICES FOR POUND AND SURROUNDING AREAS**

The nation's fifth largest cellular telephone company has constructed a new wireless communications tower in the Town of Pound. The tower is now providing new cell phone services to residents of Pound and the surrounding areas in Wise County, where these services are currently unavailable. I am now working to bring cell services to St. Paul and Appalachia.

E. **FEDERAL FUNDS SECURED FOR SPENCER-PENN CENTRE**

A \$50,000 federal grant will enable the Spencer-Penn Centre in Henry County to purchase and install new, high-quality commercial kitchen equipment, which will be used to prepare meals for the day-care facility which operates at the Centre and for banquets and other community events held at the Centre. Since the Spencer-Penn school closed in 2004, a dedicated group of volunteers have devoted thousands of hours to renovating the facility for continued use in the community.

III.

EDUCATION: PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION

- A. NEARLY \$1 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDS WILL BENEFIT SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA TEACHERS:** The U.S. Department of Education is providing a federal grant of \$992,501 to advance the professional development of American history teachers in our region's schools. With the federal funds, teachers in the Cities of Norton, Bristol and Galax and Lee, Wise, Dickenson, Buchanan, Scott, Russell, Tazewell, Washington, Smyth, Wythe, Grayson and Bland Counties will be offered courses in American history for graduate credit toward a Masters degree in Education. Additionally, teachers will attend workshops, participate in field trips and experience other hands-on learning opportunities. The new opportunities will be offered in cooperation with UVA and UVA-Wise.
- B. SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE RECEIVES FEDERAL BOOST:** The U.S. Department of Labor is providing a federal grant of nearly \$1.8 million to establish a Construction Trades Academy at Southwest Virginia Community College. The new Academy will address the region's shortage of highly trained workers in specialized construction fields. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is providing a grant of \$303,576 to increase enrollment and retention of economically disadvantaged nursing students at the College. The funds will be used to offer scholarships and reach out to high school students who might be prospective nursing students as well as to assist current students in completing the requirements of the nursing program.
- C. \$2.6 MILLION FEDERAL GRANT WILL AID VIRGINIA TECH COUNSELING SERVICES:** The tragedy which befell Virginia Tech in 2007 was of a scale and senselessness that defies explanation. In the time that has passed, an incredible spirit of cohesion and determination and a generous outpouring of support from across the nation have benefited the campus. While much healing has occurred, there remains a need for expanded counseling services for the Virginia Tech community. My office has worked closely with Virginia Tech in securing funds to assist that ongoing need, and I am pleased to report that the U.S. Department of Justice through its Victims of Crime Fund is awarding a grant of more than \$2.6 million to provide students, faculty and staff who were enrolled or employed by the University on April 16, 2007 with resources, education and outreach to address the ongoing needs of the campus.
- D. ROCKY GAP HIGH SCHOOL RECEIVES FEDERAL GRANT FOR HISTORY PROJECT:** Rocky Gap High School has received a federal grant of \$27,500 to provide state-of-the-art computer equipment for the school's new Mountain Home Center. With the federal funds, Bland County will purchase 25 laptop computers, 10 desktop computers, a network server and video and audio recording equipment, which will be used by students participating in the Bland County History Archives program at the Center to collect local histories from area residents.

- E. **EMORY AND HENRY COLLEGE TO EXPAND PUBLIC RADIO SERVICES IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA:** A federal grant of \$187,932 has been provided to Emory and Henry College to enable its radio station, WEHC, to expand significantly its coverage area. With the federal funds, the College will construct a new radio tower and purchase a transmitter and antenna for the tower. Once the tower is completed, WEHC will be accessible to listeners as far away as Richlands, Rural Retreat, Mountain City and Blountville. Also in 2008, the FCC approved the station's application to increase its broadcast power from 500 watts to 10,000 watts. WEHC offers student and other locally originated programming, including community information, and NPR programs.

- F. **BLUEFIELD COLLEGE BUILDING NEW DORM WITH FEDERAL ASSISTANCE:** A low-interest, federal loan of \$3 million and a loan guarantee of \$1.3 million will enable Bluefield College to construct a new residence hall on its campus. The new residence hall will meet the growing demand for on-campus housing and provide room for growth in the resident student body in the future.

- G. **FEDERAL GRANT WILL PROVIDE SAFE PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT AT CARROLL COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:** A federal grant of \$84,525 will purchase safe playground equipment for the four Elementary schools in Carroll County which offer pre-kindergarten programs. The schools currently do not have playground equipment designed to accommodate safely children younger than five.

IV.

TRANSPORTATION: THE LINK TO A BROADER ECONOMY

- A. **FEDERAL STATUS TO EXPEDITE COALFIELDS EXPRESSWAY RENEWED:** At my request and that of Virginia Governor Tim Kaine, the Federal Highway Administration has restored the special status that will enable the Coalfields Expressway to be built more quickly under one comprehensive contract and at a greatly reduced cost. With the special federal status restored, our prospects for construction of the road have never been better. An innovative new partnership has formed with leading Virginia coal producers which will significantly reduce the time and cost of construction. The coal producers will develop the Coalfields Expressway roadbed in conjunction with coal extraction activities. The reinstatement of the special federal contracting status has allowed construction on the first segment of the road to commence.

- B. **\$42,000 IN FEDERAL FUNDS WILL PROVIDE 1000 INDIVIDUALS EACH YEAR WITH TRANSPORTATION TO WORK:** A federal grant of \$23,100 and a low-interest, federal loan of \$18,900 is being provided to Rooftop of Virginia to purchase two new vehicles for its Employment Assistance Program. Rooftop of Virginia is a Community Action Program dedicated to eliminating poverty in the City of Galax and Grayson and Carroll Counties.

With the two new vehicles, Rooftop will provide transportation to and from work for individuals who do not have access to a vehicle.

V.

NINTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT CONFERENCES CONDUCTED IN 2008

- A. NINTH DISTRICT AGRICULTURE CONFERENCES:** This year I hosted two Ninth District Agriculture Conferences to inform local farmers and others interested in our region's agricultural economy about new opportunities for marketing locally grown, high quality meats and produce. Agriculture is an essential part of the economy of Southwest Virginia, and the production and marketing of locally grown meats and produce is vital to our continued success. For the past several years, I have worked with our region's farmers to develop new opportunities to sell their locally grown products, and the conferences I hosted reported on our progress in developing new approaches to expanding the region's agricultural economy.
- B. FORMER IRISH PRIME MINISTER SPEAKS TO NINTH DISTRICT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE:** In September, I hosted a conference in Wytheville to inform residents interested in Southwest Virginia's economy about how our region's common heritage with Ireland and Western Europe can provide new economic opportunities for the region. The Honorable John Bruton, Former Irish Prime Minister, was a featured presenter at the Conference. The new Irish economy is an outstanding model for our region, which has a Scotts Irish heritage and a work ethic similar to that of Ireland. During the past two decades, Ireland has experienced a remarkable period of economic transformation and growth, moving from an economy relying heavily on agriculture with a high unemployment rate to a technology based economy so successful that it is known as the Silicon Valley of Europe. Planning is now underway for closer linkages that can be formed between our region and Ireland to advance tourism and our attraction of technology based companies.
- C. NINTH DISTRICT BROADBAND WORKSHOPS:** For the past several years, I have hosted a series of workshops to inform local governments and Internet service providers of the federal funding programs available for the construction of broadband networks. As a result of these workshops, communities throughout the Ninth District have been successful in seeking highly competitive grant funds to build broadband networks to provide Internet service to residents in areas that do not have high speed capabilities at present. This year, I set a goal for the Ninth District to have more grant applications submitted than any other Congressional District in the nation. Several communities joined my challenge, and I am pleased to report that our region received more broadband grants this year than any other Congressional District nationally.

- D. NINTH DISTRICT WORKSHOPS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS:** Each year, my office hosts a workshop for our region's first responders to provide information about how they can apply for federal funding in order to acquire much needed equipment. This year, representatives from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development agency, and the Virginia Department of Fire Programs provided information on federal funding programs to local fire departments, rescue squads and police and sheriff's departments.

VI.

HEALTH CARE: IMPROVING ACCESS FOR SOUTHWEST VIRGINIANS

Each year, I work closely with health care providers and local governments across the Ninth Congressional District to secure federal funding to expand access to high quality health care services for our region's residents. This year, I am pleased to report that we have made significant progress in expanding the availability of affordable and convenient access to health care services to Southwest Virginians.

- A. NEW COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINICS OPEN:** I am pleased to report that this year, three new community health clinics, supported financially by the U.S. Public Health Service, have opened. The three clinics are located in Bassett, Floyd and Hurley. Each of the clinics will offer health care services on a sliding fee scale based on the patient's ability to pay. Due to the sliding fee arrangement, even people who cannot afford healthcare will be able to receive services. It is estimated that the three clinics will receive a total of more than 10,000 patient visits each year.
- B. MAJOR EXPANSION OF BLAND MEDICAL CLINIC COMPLETED:** Since 2004, more than \$2.8 million in federal funding has been provided to expand and improve services at the Bland County Medical Clinic, and earlier this year, a major renovation of the clinic was completed. Patient visits to the clinic had increased dramatically in the past decade, and in order to account for the increase, the clinic has more than doubled its size and purchased new, state-of-the-art medical and computer equipment.
- C. FEDERAL GRANT WILL AID ESTABLISHMENT OF DENTAL CLINIC IN SALTVILLE:** At my urging, the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Rural Development Agency is providing a low-interest, federal loan of \$519,000 to Southwest Virginia Community Health Systems to aid in establishing a regional dental clinic in Saltville to serve people who can otherwise not afford dental care. The Dental School at Virginia Commonwealth University has committed to sending fourth-year dental students to see patients at the clinic as part of their education. A supervising dentist will oversee the students. The dental clinic will operate on a sliding fee scale so that even those who cannot afford dental care will be able to receive services. Additional fundraising for the clinic is now underway.

- D. NEW TELEMEDICINE SITES TO BE ESTABLISHED THROUGHOUT THE REGION:** With the benefit of federal funding, four new telemedicine sites are being linked electronically to the University of Virginia's hospital in Charlottesville in order to serve patients visiting the clinics in Whitetop, Meadowview, Tazewell and Haysi. Telemedicine provides a means of obtaining diagnostic services and other forms of specialized care for patients in rural settings without the necessity of having to travel to teaching hospitals and other distant centers of medical specialization. Through advances in telecommunications technology, medical images, including X-rays, lab slides, CAT scans and magnetic resonance images can be transmitted across the telecommunications network. The distant center of specialization receives the image with the same clarity that is contained in the original, and the specialist in the distant center can render an opinion with the same degree of certainty as if he or she were viewing the original image.
- E. MOUNTAIN EMPIRE OLDER CITIZENS RECEIVES FEDERAL BOOST FOR PACE CENTER:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Rural Development Agency is providing a low-interest, federal loan of \$600,000 to Mountain Empire Older Citizens for the construction of its PACE Center in Big Stone Gap. This allocation of federal funding brings the total federal investment in the PACE Center to \$4 million. PACE is an acronym for Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly, and the new facility will provide a one-stop health care and social center for the region's elderly residents. The new building will have an adult day care center, examination space for medical appointments, and clinic space for physical, speech and other types of therapies. The new Center will offer older individuals from Lee, Scott and Wise Counties and the City of Norton an alternative to leaving their homes for institutionalized care. Individuals enrolled in PACE will be able to live in their own homes, while receiving health care and therapy services either at home or at the new Center.
- F. \$15 MILLION IN FEDERAL TAX CREDITS WILL IMPROVE HEALTH CARE IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA:** The U.S. Department of the Treasury through its New Market Tax Credit Program is awarding \$15 million in tax credit allocation authority to Virginia Community Capital, Inc. located in Christiansburg. The New Market Tax Credit program is designed to attract and encourage private investment in low-income communities. Investors will provide a total of \$15 million in capital to Virginia Community Capital, receiving federal tax credits in return. Virginia Community Capital will use the funds to provide low interest loans to health care facilities which serve low income residents. The loans can be used for the construction of new buildings or to improve or expand existing clinics.

VII.

HONORING SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA VETERANS

- A. DEED FOR SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA’S FIRST VETERANS CEMETERY FORMALLY TRANSFERRED TO THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA:** Our region does not currently have a veterans cemetery, and the nearest one to our area is in the Eastern part of Virginia. So that we can properly honor the Southwest Virginians who have served our nation in uniform, I have made it a goal to build a veterans cemetery in the 9th District. We are now very close to achieving our goal. The U.S. Congress has approved and the President signed into law legislation I authored directing the U.S. Army to convey 79.8 acres of land it owns near the Town of Dublin to the Commonwealth of Virginia for the purpose of establishing the region’s first veterans cemetery. At a formal ceremony in Dublin this Fall, I handed to Virginia Governor Tim Kaine the deed to the land upon which Southwest Virginia’s first veterans cemetery will be constructed. With the conveyance of the land from the federal government to Virginia now complete and a federal grant to build the facility expected soon, construction is anticipated to begin on the cemetery in 2009.
- B. VETERANS CLINIC DEDICATED IN HILLSVILLE:** One of my priorities is ensuring the availability of high quality, easily accessible health care for our region’s veterans. To that end, I have worked successfully with the Department of Veterans Affairs in order to establish community-based outpatient clinics throughout the Ninth District. In July, I was pleased to participate in the dedication of the new veterans outpatient clinic in Hillsville. The new clinic provides primary care services, on-site digital X-ray and lab services, nutritional counseling and mental health services.
- C. VA MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT INCREASES FOR VETERANS WHO DRIVE LONG DISTANCES FOR CARE:** Veterans living in rural areas face unique challenges. While progress to expand convenient access to health care for veterans has occurred in our region, many veterans must drive long distances to receive care. I am pleased to report that the U.S. Congress has approved with my strong support an increase in the mileage reimbursement the VA provides for veterans’ travel to the VA hospitals to 41.5 cents per mile. The increase will appropriately compensate veterans in rural areas for traveling expenses.

VIII.

2008 LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

A. NINTH DISTRICT SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

1. **Congress Approves Resolution to Honor Barter Theatre:** This Fall Congress approved a resolution I authored honoring the Barter Theatre in Abingdon on the occasion of its 75th anniversary. The Barter Theatre has become a favorite destination for visitors to Southwest Virginia. The Theatre is not only a premier tourism asset which significantly benefits our region's economy, but it has also made a lasting cultural contribution to the region.
2. **Congress Approves Measure to Transfer Alleghany County Cemetery to Central Advent Christian Church:** Legislation I authored to convey an 8-acre tract of federal land containing a cemetery located in Alleghany County to the Central Advent Christian Church in Clifton Forge was enacted into law in May. The Church had 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 had no alternative plans to use the property, the conveyance was in the interest of all concerned parties.
3. **Legislation Introduced to Convey Federally Owned New River Campground:** In June, I introduced legislation which would convey the campground owned by the federal government adjacent to the New River Trail to the Commonwealth of Virginia. The land conveyance is necessary due to the Forest Service's decision to close the campground for the past 2 seasons for budgetary reasons. With the transfer, the State could reopen the campground, and it could be easily maintained by the New River State Park personnel already in close proximity.

B. ENERGY AND AIR QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE ACTIVITIES: As Chairman of the Energy and Air Quality Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, I have been uniquely positioned to develop energy and clean air policies with the views of Southwest Virginia's industries, such as coal and agriculture, at the forefront.

1. **Climate Change Discussion Draft Introduced:** In October, I joined with Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee John Dingell in drafting climate change legislation for consideration in 2009 that establishes an economy-wide program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The draft is the culmination of nearly two years of intensive work on climate change conducted by the subcommittee, including 27 days of hearings, four white papers, numerous workshops and consultation with scores of industry and environmental groups,

non-governmental organizations and labor unions. The legislation will assure long term coal use while reducing CO2 emissions by 80% by 2050. The draft marks an important step forward in our ongoing efforts to address the challenge of climate change.

2. **Legislation Introduced to Accelerate the Availability of Carbon Capture and Sequestration Technology:** Earlier this year, I introduced bipartisan legislation to advance the development and demonstration of carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) technologies. CCS is a method of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by capturing and injecting underground the carbon dioxide emitted from electricity generation plants and other facilities that use fossil fuels. The legislation addresses the clear need to continue the use of coal for power generation. Coal is America's most abundant domestic fuel and accounts for more than one-half of the fuel used for electricity generation. The widespread availability of CCS technologies is essential to preventing economic disruption when greenhouse gas restrictions are imposed.

C. OTHER LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES OF INTEREST

1. **House Approves Amendment to Provide Rehabilitation Services to Miners:** Earlier this year, the U.S. House of Representatives approved an amendment I sponsored to authorize \$10 million in federal grants to programs providing mental health and rehabilitation services to current and former miners struggling with prescription medicine dependency which stems from injuries incurred at work. The grant funds would be directed to regions of the country disproportionately affected by the problem. I will continue to work in 2009 to enact the grant program into law.
2. **Legislation to Clarify Business Activity Tax Introduced:** I have introduced legislation to clarify the uncertainty about when states can levy business activity taxes on out-of-state businesses. For the past several years, a growing number of states have sought to collect business activity taxes from businesses in other states that have minimal contacts with the state seeking to impose the tax. The measure I authored provides clarity by setting a physical presence nexus standard, which would ensure that states have the ability to tax businesses that benefit from services provided by the state while businesses that have no physical presence in a state would be exempt from taxation on business activity in the state.

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