

DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY: SUPPORT MINIMUM APPROPRIATIONS OF \$12 MILLION

ISSUE:

Support funding the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) at \$12 million as part of the FY2007 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill, including \$2 million for the activities of the multi-county local development districts.

BACKGROUND:

Covering 240 counties in an eight-state region, the DRA is a federal-state partnership designed to stimulate economic development throughout the Mississippi River Delta area. By working with the region's eight governors and the network of multi-county local development districts, the DRA helps economically depressed communities leverage public, philanthropic and private sector programs that are focused on business development, basic infrastructure development and transportation improvements. Under federal law, 75 percent of funds are targeted to distressed counties and 50 percent of dollars are reserved for transportation and basic infrastructure improvements.

The Delta authority utilizes an existing network of multi-county development districts to coordinate efforts within a sub-state area. Known as local development districts (LDDs), these regional entities have a proven track record in helping small municipalities and counties improve basic infrastructure and stimulate economic growth and provide vital services and expertise for underserved and impoverished communities. By pooling limited local resources, these LDDs lead regions and local efforts to craft and, more importantly, implement strategic action plans. They provide a neutral forum to bring key public, community and private sector leaders together to promote regional partnerships to build essential organizational and community capacity and to pursue community and economic development activities.

By working closely with the local development districts, the DRA has been able to combat long-term economic distress in the region by helping to create 10,345 new jobs and provide job training services to over 3,425 individuals. While the LDD/DRA partnership has brokered many positive changes for the residents of the Mississippi Delta, much work remains ahead. Many rural counties throughout the Delta footprint continue to suffer from high rates of unemployment, chronic poverty and a lack of quality public infrastructure. There is a need for coordinated and strategic federal investments in the Delta region, with an increased focus on leveraging the activities of local development districts.

ACTION NEEDED:

As part of the FY2007 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill, urge House and Senate appropriators to provide \$12 million for the Delta Regional Authority with \$2 million reserved for the activities and initiatives of multi-county local development districts.

For more information, contact NADO Legislative Representative Amy Linehan at 202.624.8177 or alinehan@nado.org.