

Michaud and Colleagues Push For Economic Development Funding for Northeast

Tuesday, March 31 2009

WASHINGTON, DC – Last night, Congressman Mike Michaud joined his colleagues in sending a letter to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development advocating full funding for the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC). The NBRC was created by legislation authored by Michaud and passed into law last year. The NBRC is charged with investing in the economic development of the most economically distressed areas of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and parts of Upstate New York. The NBRC's approach to regional economic development is based on the highly successful Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) model.

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“This effective public–private partnership model has enjoyed overwhelming bipartisan support because it works and because it has been a good investment for the American taxpayer,” said Michaud. “For example, in Fiscal Year 2005, each dollar of ARC funding leveraged \$2.57 in other public funding and \$8.46 in private funding. This represents a tremendous return on investment. Now that the Northern Border Regional Commission is law, it must be funded so that it can get to work for our region.”

Earlier this year, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee endorsed full-funding of the Northern Border Regional Commission in its recommendation to the Budget Committee.

The complete text of the letter that Michaud and his colleagues sent can be found below.

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March 30, 2009

Dear Chairman Olver and Ranking Member Latham:

We are writing to respectfully request funding in the Fiscal Year 2010 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for the Northern Border Regional Commission (the Commission). The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (HR 6124) authorized the Commission as an ongoing program at \$30,000,000. We ask that you include the full authorized amount for the Commission in your bill.

In the belt of counties along the Northern border from Maine through New York, 13.1 percent of the population lives in poverty, median household income is \$6,500 below the national average, unemployment is significantly higher than the national average, and the population has actually decreased by 0.6 percent between 1990 and 2000, while the U.S. population rose by 13.2 percent. The region shares many common economic challenges stemming from relative geographic isolation, aging infrastructure, and a loss of natural resource based industry that has historically been an

economic engine. However, the region also has a common set of assets, as well as historical and geographic ties. The Commission will invest in these economically distressed communities.

The Commission's primary responsibility will be the approval of grants and economic development plans for the region. It will create and implement regional economic development plans to reduce poverty, address changing land use, and improve the quality of life for residents. The Commission utilizes the successful Appalachian Regional Commission model that facilitates a "bottom-up" approach where local development districts, non-profit organizations, and others bring project ideas and priorities to the Commission from the local level. This model helps foster improved collaboration and coordination within a sub-state region and among federal and state agencies, while also serving as a vehicle to leverage additional public and private sector investments. The Commission will fund projects that both strengthen traditional sectors in the region's economy and lead to a more diversified economy. By taking a regional view, the Commission can promote projects that confer a broader benefit without states having to compete among themselves for scarce funds for the region.

The Commission is extremely important to the economic development, vitality, and future of the northern border region. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Mike Michaud (D-ME)

Chellie Pingree (D-ME)

Paul W. Hodes (D-NH)

Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH)

John McHugh (R-NY)

Michael Arcuri (D-NY)

Peter Welch (D-VT)