

# Recovery Act impacts rural America positively

The U.S. Department of Agriculture highlighted the successes of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act one year after its passage.

Evidence is clear - and growing by the day - that the Recovery Act is working to cushion the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression and lay a new foundation for economic growth.

"President Obama's Recovery Act has helped create jobs and lay a new foundation for economic growth during the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

"United States Department of Agriculture has used Recovery Act funding to create badly-needed jobs and stimulate local economies, help farmers and rural businesses make it through tough times, ensure that struggling families can put food on the table and build and revitalize critical infrastructure in rural communities across America."

Since the Recovery Act was signed into law a year ago, United States Department of Agriculture has moved quickly to get dollars out the door. Aside from funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which is allocated on a mandatory basis each month, United States Department of Agriculture has announced the vast majority of its remaining \$7.9 billion to support more than 90,000 grants, loans and other job-creating projects.

In the first year implementing the Recovery Act, United States Department of Agriculture has:

- Provided over \$100 billion in tax relief for American businesses and families, including tax cuts for 95 percent of working families through the Making Work Pay tax Credit. And tax relief is expected to nearly double in the coming months.

- Helped over 38 million Americans who need food assistance by providing an average increase in benefits of \$80 per month to low-income households of four.

This funding is a fast-acting economic stimulus as every \$1 in food benefits generates up to

\$1.84 in total economic activity, supporting jobs at all levels of the food chain.

- Helped 85,420 rural Americans purchase or repair their homes with affordable loans while simultaneously stimulating the economy and creating jobs in the construction and real estate sectors.

- Helped create private sector jobs protecting rural communities from large wildfires, while improving the health of our forests, water and air resources. We provided \$500 million to treat over 134,000 acres of forest to reduce the risk of wildfire.

- Provided 2,636 loans to farmers and ranchers help them purchase the farm equipment, feed, seed and fuel they needed to keep their farms operating and support jobs in the rural economy. Approximately half of these loans went to beginning farmers and 25 percent to socially disadvantaged farmers.

- Helped more than 5,000 schools purchase equipment to improve the safe and healthy meals they serve to children.

In the coming months, United States Department of Agriculture will be implementing additional programs and projects as weather begins to thaw, and construction projects are expected to break ground across the country. In 2010, United States Department of Agriculture will continue to invest in projects to help get Americans and the economy back to work:

- By bringing broadband internet to an estimated 1.2 million households, 230,000 businesses and 7,800 anchor institutions like hospitals and schools across rural America, in one of the largest job generating efforts to date. This \$3.4 billion investment will give businesses access to global markets and spur rural economic development.

- By helping 300 rural businesses grow, innovate and create jobs, providing \$900 million on top of \$570 million already at work helping 160 businesses across the country.

We will provide nearly \$750 million on top of \$470 million

already announced for more than 850 projects.

By constructing and rebuilding water and waste water systems in more than 200 communities affecting 1 million rural Americans. We will provide nearly \$1 billion on top of more than \$2 billion already announced for projects in 530 communities.

More information about United States Department of Agriculture's Recovery Act efforts is available at [www.United States Department of Agriculture.gov/recovery](http://www.United States Department of Agriculture.gov/recovery).

Log on to United States Department of Agriculture's YouTube channel to view additional American Recovery and Reinvestment Act project highlights, videos are available at <http://www.youtube.com/user/United States Department of Agriculture#g/c/2A468F5AC6EBCED7>

## Schools

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 • Cuts a further \$85.9 million from local option budget state aid, which will impact some districts far more severely than others, based solely on the property wealth of the districts. Districts will either have to cut their budgets more than the \$131, or raise local property taxes.

- Would result in an \$85.9 million property tax increase if districts seek to replace lost state LOB aid, with local increases varying from under one mill to nearly 50 districts with double-digit mill levy increases.

• School districts have been criticized for not directing more dollars to the classroom, the bill creates a new fund to allow districts to spend more on local activities and sports, while cutting the general fund that supports instruction.

- The bill authorizes two new property tax-based funds, the Local Activities Budget and the Equity Budget, neither of which receives state equalization aid. The result will likely be both higher property taxes in certain districts and further disparity in mill levies for districts seeking

to use them.  
 • The bill eliminates high enrollment weighting and reduces other school finance weightings.  
 • HB 2739 will require all districts to have at least a 10 percent local option budget as a "local foundation budget," in addition to the 20-mill statewide levy and general state aid. The result will be different mill levies to fund the "foundation" requirement of the state.

HB 2739 was referred to the education budget committee yesterday and was scheduled to be discussed today.

## Winners

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 the winners will each receive a one year supply of Hill's Science Diet food, approximately a \$1,000 value.

The three winners were: Gary Erlenbush with his golden retriever Koda, who lost a total of 31.6

pounds; Jerome Foskuhl and his Chihuahua Rascal, who lost 6.4 pounds; and lastly, David Stover and his golden retriever Sadie, who lost a total of 8 pounds.

Both Sadie and Rascal took part in the Fetch for Fitness program sponsored by the Norton Animal

Health Center last year.  
 "Sign me up for the Fetch for Fitness again this year," Foskuhl said.

The program will start again on April 27 and will run through June 1, taking place every Tuesday at Tweed Park.

## Census

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 "There's less personal information asked on the census than on taxes," Applegate said.

She said if any census employee gives out information they are fined \$250,000 and sent to prison for five years.

Rowh said the census is sent out every 10 years and is used to determine where \$4 trillion dollars is dispersed as well as how representation is decided in Topeka and in Washington. Several billion dollars comes to Kansas every year because of census figures.

Applegate said last night Norton's City Council announced it would apply for grants to fund a new fire truck or for curb and gutter repair.

"When census forms are not sent back to be counted, we directly lose money for our county,"

Applegate said.

"For every signature, for every response, \$1,250 will come back to our communities. It's just a must that we do it," Rowh said.

Applegate said only 68 percent returned the census in 2000, leaving 32 percent uncounted.

"This left 32 percent not counted for, leaving one-third of our potential funding in Washington, not in Norton County," she said.

Wava Hogan attended the presentation. She said she already filled it out.

"I filled it out and sent it in the next day," she said.

Applegate said Norton County wants 100 percent participation.

"Please encourage your friends and relatives to fill out the census. If you have questions or need help, go to the library, county clerk or call us," she said.

## Video presentation Thursday at Library

By **DICK BOYD**  
[nortontelegram@nwkansas.com](mailto:nortontelegram@nwkansas.com)

The third in a series of public video presentations answering important questions about America's foundation of freedom will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday in the Community Room in the Norton Public Library.

Those attending are asked to enter on the east side of the community room.

Other video presentations on the same subject are scheduled for Thursday, April 8 and Thursday, April 22.

Ardith Scheetz of Clayton and Kathy Wilmot of Beaver City are sponsoring the presentations as their contribution to the Norton community where they work.

"To answer the many questions and issues that are the subject of discussions today, it is critical that we understand America's foundation of freedom," said Ardith.

"As citizens, it is important that we deal with facts and make decisions that are sound."

"When America is sending millions of dollars to Haiti, why are we not allowed to fly our American flag over our military units located there to help their people?" said Kathy.

"When did eminent domain become an avenue to take private property from one individual and give that property to another individual?"

"Is it government of the people, by the people and for the people or are the people human capital for the government?"

"Is America a greedy nation and an oppressor or is America a beacon of freedom?"

Kathy and Ardith are sponsoring these meetings to answer these and other important questions related to our American foundation and its future.

"High School students and adults as well will find these movies riveting and educational," said Kathy.

Coffee and refreshments will be served.

There is no charge for the presentations.

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