



A Regional Growth Corporation

For Immediate Release

Southeast Kentucky
Economic Development Corp.
2292 South Highway 27
Somerset, Kentucky 42501
Phone: (606) 677-6100
Fax: (606) 656-0256
Web: southeastkentucky.com

Contact: Cheryl Meadows
Communications Director
(606) 677-6101

New USDA StrikeForce Program Will Enhance SKED's Services

SOMERSET, Ky. – All communities in SKED's 45-county service area will benefit from a designation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced earlier this month.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Vilsack detailed the expansion of the USDA's StrikeForce Initiative into four additional states, including Kentucky, Louisiana, Tennessee and West Virginia, at a meeting in Bell County, Ky. on January 17.

Secretary Vilsack was joined by Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear, U.S. Representative Harold "Hal" Rogers, and a host of community leaders and supporters at the event held at Pine Mountain State Park in Pineville. In addition to the USDA announcement, the final report on the Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR) Summit was revealed. Leaders agreed the significant new partnership opportunities through the USDA would mean promising new strategies for the success of eastern Kentucky and the entire Commonwealth.

Secretary Vilsack said the Kentucky StrikeForce region includes nearly two-thirds of Kentucky's counties – 73 in total. All will be part of the StrikeForce, which means the USDA will partner with local community organizations, businesses, foundations, universities and other groups to support local projects and pursue needed investments into rural areas. The program's expansion to Kentucky brings StrikeForce attention to more than 700 rural counties, parishes, boroughs, tribal reservations and Colonias in 20 states.

"The StrikeForce strategy of partnering public resources with local expertise is helping to grow rural economies and create jobs in persistent poverty communities," said Vilsack. "This is a strategy that is working in rural America and I am pleased that we continue to build on these efforts to bring assistance to areas in Kentucky that need it the most."

Since 2010, the USDA StrikeForce program has partnered with 400 community organizations, businesses, foundations, universities and other groups to support 80,300 projects and ushered in more than \$9.7 billion in investments in rural America, according to a USDA press release.

Successful projects have been developed in a number of different agencies through the USDA. Some include: The Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Housing Community Services program and Food and Nutrition Service.

Businesses and communities within SKED's service region will be directly affected by the creation of similar successful projects in the Kentucky StrikeForce region, said SKED Board Chairman Tim Barnes.

"This new targeted effort will help build on the programs SKED already has in place. Business owners and community leaders with access to our job creation, direct loan assistance, entrepreneurial training and technical assistance services over the past 27 years will now have available to them even more financial and economic assistance, thanks to the USDA's StrikeForce initiative.

SKED's Service Area includes the following counties: Adair, Bath, Bell, Boyd, Breathitt, Carter, Casey, Clay, Clinton, Cumberland, Estill, Floyd, Garrard, Green, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Lincoln, McCreary, Madison, Magoffin, Martin, Menifee, Metcalfe, Monroe, Morgan, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Powell, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Rowan, Russell, Taylor, Wayne, Whitley and Wolfe.

For information about SKED visit: www.southeastkentucky.com.

-End-

Formed 27 years ago by Fifth District Congressman Hal Rogers to create jobs in Southeast Kentucky, the economic development organization, based in Somerset, serves a 45-county region in Kentucky. Staff works with business owners, small and large, throughout its service area to identify financing solutions to fund their location, expansion and working capital needs.