

**CONGRESSMAN**  
**Rick Boucher**



**Ninth District**  
**Virginia**

*Annual Congressional Activities*  
*Report for 2005*



# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

December 2005

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, advancing the telecommunications network and supporting the regional farm economy.

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 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.

Sincerely,

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

RICK BOUCHER  
Member of Congress

# **I. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: MY TOP PRIORITY**

## **A. SHOWCASING SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA**

Since its inception in 1987, my Showcasing Southwest Virginia program has stimulated the region's economy by bringing more than 4,000 jobs to the Ninth District. The program's successes continued in 2005:

- 1. KCG Call Center Opens in Lee County** – In August, the new KCG Customer Service Center opened its doors in the Town of Pennington Gap following participation by the company in my Showcasing Southwest Virginia program. KCG is part of a large and rapidly growing corporate group which operates numerous customer service centers in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The company plans to hire a total of 225 employees in Lee County.
- 2. Call Evolution Center to Create New Jobs in Scott County** – I recently announced another major success for my Showcasing Southwest Virginia program in Scott County. Call Evolution will soon open its doors at the Pioneer Center in Duffield. The company plans to create a total of 125 new positions in the customer service and management fields with a total investment of approximately \$1.5 million to prepare space at the Pioneer Center for the new facility.
- 3. Showcasing Southwest Virginia Tours Promote Region to Technology and Manufacturing Companies** – In 2005, my Showcasing Southwest Virginia program focused primarily on the attraction of technology-based companies to the region. I hosted tours for corporate executives of seven well-known telecommunications companies and two manufacturing companies who visited the Ninth District at my invitation during the year. My goal is to encourage a range of businesses such as database management, software design, reservations operations, polling firms, directory assistance centers and technical support services to invest in Southwest Virginia. The attraction of these companies will be a continuing priority in 2006.
- 4. Showcasing Southwest Virginia Tours Promote Development of Coal-Fired Power Facility** – Attraction to our region of a coal-fired power generating facility that utilizes new clean-coal technologies presents an excellent opportunity for Southwest Virginia. A new coal-fired plant would generate hundreds of jobs for local residents while assuring a long-term market for Southwest Virginia coal.

Such a plant will entail a large capital investment in the coal-producing region of Virginia. In 2005, my Showcasing Southwest Virginia program conducted tours of potential power plant sites in seven counties for a company planning to build coal-fired generation facilities in the near future.

## **B. TOURISM: A MAJOR SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA ECONOMIC POTENTIAL**

A major focus of my office's economic development agenda is the expansion of Southwest Virginia's tourism economy which has tremendous growth potential. With the state's best outdoor experience and Virginia's most interesting cultural offerings, we truly have much to attract the traveling public.

1. **Congress Approves \$2.56 Million for Daniel Boone Visitors' and Exposition Center in Scott County** – At my request, the U.S. Congress has approved \$2.56 million to develop Scott County's Daniel Boone Visitors' and Expo Center. The federal funding will finance much of the preliminary work needed to enable construction of the center, including the detailed engineering and design work and several other activities. The Visitors' and Expo Center, which will be constructed in Duffield, will house an exhibit area featuring Daniel Boone and Revolutionary era archives pertaining to the region, a library and a theater. The Center will also host a wide range of agricultural shows and programs, exhibitions of various kinds, and large group meetings and conferences for which no sufficient facility currently exists in Scott County or the surrounding region in Virginia.
2. **Federal Funding Secured to Plan Development of Rocky Knob Site in Floyd and Patrick Counties** – \$1.2 million in federal funding has been awarded at my request to finance tourism development at Rocky Knob which is located along the Blue Ridge Parkway in Patrick and Floyd Counties. The federal funding will facilitate the development of the Rocky Knob site and will enable the work of the Rocky Knob advisory committee, which is comprised of community leaders from Patrick, Floyd and Carroll Counties.
3. **White's Mill to be Restored Using Federal Funds** - \$400,000 in federal funding which I obtained will be used to renovate and restore the historic White's Mill and surrounding property in Washington County. White's Mill is one of the oldest structures and is the only remaining operable commercial water mill in Southwest Virginia. The property has long been a local attraction for residents

of Washington County and the neighboring communities and, once restored, promises to become a major tourist attraction.

4. **Blue Ridge Music Center Now Complete** – Construction for the final phase of the Blue Ridge Music Center at Fishers Peak in Carroll and Grayson Counties is now finished. At my request, the U.S. Congress has appropriated more than \$13 million in federal funding for the Center, including \$1.2 million awarded this year for the development of permanent exhibits for the newly constructed Visitors’ Center. The exhibits will be featured in one wing of the new Visitors’ Center. In the facility’s opposite wing, an auditorium which will host smaller concerts, interpretive talks and educational movies is housed.
5. **Funds Approved for the Improvement of the Virginia Creeper Trail** – At my urging, the U.S. Congress has approved \$840,000 in federal appropriations for several improvement projects along the Virginia Creeper Trail. \$680,000 will be used to construct a new park near Damascus, new visitor parking at Watauga, and restroom facilities at Alvarado. \$80,000 will be used to install new heating and air conditioning systems at the historic Green Cove Station, and the final \$80,000 will enable the completion of the Whitetop Station complex through the addition of picnic facilities and the reconstruction of the old train turntable into an amphitheater.
6. **Additional Funding Provided for Repairs and Expansion of Carter Family Fold** – In May, I announced a \$25,000 federal grant to the Carter Family Music Center to make improvements to, and increase the capacity of, the Carter Family Fold. The federal grant, in conjunction with other federal funds which I previously secured, will be used to construct an additional tier at the Fold which will increase the capacity of the amphitheater by 200 seats. In addition, the roof will be replaced, the wiring and heating systems will be upgraded, and new parking and vending areas will be constructed. The federal funding will also be used to rehabilitate the A.P. Carter Store and Museum and relocate the A.P. Carter homeplace cabin to the Carter Fold site.
7. **Tourism Development in Pocahontas Advances** - \$450,000 in federal funding is being provided at my request for tourism development in the Town of Pocahontas. \$400,000 will be used to construct a recreation trail adjacent to the rail line which leads from the Town to Blue Stone Junction in Mercer County, West Virginia. A \$50,000 grant has been secured to stabilize and restore the Company Store building in downtown Pocahontas.

8. **Federal Funds Used to Construct Wayne Henderson Performance Stage at Grayson Highlands State Park** – At my request, \$68,750 in federal grant funding has been awarded for the construction of a new performance stage at the Grayson Highlands State Park. The stage will be used annually during the Wayne Henderson Guitar Competition and Music Festival and during other events hosted at the Park. A \$50,000 federal grant has been used to construct the new stage. A second federal grant in the amount of \$18,750 has been awarded for the purchase and installation of sound equipment for the performance stage.
9. **“Map Guide to Appalachia” Initiative Launched to Promote Tourism** – In April, a new initiative was launched by National Geographic magazine and the Appalachian Regional Commission to promote tourism throughout the Appalachian region. A special map highlighting tourist locations was inserted in the April issue of Traveler magazine, and a website was launched as part of the effort. Thirty sites in Southwest Virginia were included on the map, which has been distributed to millions of magazine subscribers, greatly enhancing our visibility as a tourism destination.
10. **Thomas J. Boyd Museum in Wytheville Receives Federal Boost** – A federal grant in the amount of \$71,000 is being provided to the Thomas J. Boyd Museum for the development of a permanent exhibit to chronicle the polio epidemic experienced in Wythe County in 1950. Officials at the Museum plan to work with a professional museum and educational consultant in planning and designing the permanent exhibit.
11. **Barter Theatre Awarded Federal Grant for Stanley Brothers Production** – A federal grant in the amount of \$35,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts has enabled the production of *Man of Constant Sorrow: The Story of the Stanley Brothers* at the Barter Theatre. The federal funding enabled the final development of the script, set and costume design as well as other pre-production elements which have allowed the musical to be performed.
12. **Lincoln Theater in Marion Receives Federal Grant to Support ‘Song of the Mountains’ Concert Series** – \$40,000 in federal grant funding was awarded this summer to the Lincoln Theater to support the ‘Song of the Mountains’ concert series. The concerts have been scheduled for airing on Blue Ridge Public Television and other PBS stations. Many regional bluegrass bands and traditional musicians participated in the concerts this summer, bringing exposure to our region’s unique form of music and to the renovated Lincoln Theater.

13. **Horse Trails to be Constructed at High Knob in Scott County** - \$600,000 has been approved by the Congress at my request for the development and construction of a network of horse trails in the High Knob area of the Jefferson National Forest in Scott County. Appropriate parking facilities for automobiles and horse trailers will also be established.
14. **Federal Funds Secured for Development of Smith River Trail in Henry County** – At my urging, the U.S. Congress has given final approval to \$400,000 in federal funding for the development of a walking and biking trail along the Smith River in Henry County. The planned trail will lead from Philpott Dam, through the Towns of Fieldale and Bassett, and end in the City of Martinsville. The federal funding will be used to acquire the property for the trail and to conduct the preliminary design work for the new trail.
15. **Improvements to be Made to Craig County Greenway** – Earlier this year, I secured federal funding in the amount of \$120,000 for improvements to an existing greenway in Craig County. The Craig County Greenway leads from downtown New Castle toward the Fenwick Mines site which is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. The Virginia Department of Transportation and the Forest Service will use the funds to develop plans for the greenway upgrades. Once completed, the greenway will be available for hiking, biking and horseback riding.
16. **Fries Train Station to be Reconstructed** – The U.S. Congress has approved \$800,000 in federal funding, at my request, to enable the resurrection of the Fries Train Station. Once reconstructed, the facility will serve as a visitors’ center which will provide information on New River recreational opportunities, the New River Trail and other recreational or cultural offerings of Fries and nearby Twin County communities. The building will be constructed on the property of the original train station, and the architecture will be in keeping with the original structure.
17. **Bristol Train Station Receives Federal Boost** – A total of \$1.4 million in federal funding was approved earlier this year by the Congress to enable further renovation of the Bristol Train Station. The exterior of the facility has been renovated. Using the federal funds, the interior public spaces will be restored. Once completed, the space will be used for a wide range of community events.

18. **Federal Funding Secured for Tourism Development in Bland County** – At my request, the U.S. Congress has approved \$800,000 in federal funding for a far-reaching tourism development project in Bland County. The federal funding will be used to create new points of access for visitors into the Jefferson National Forest in Bland County, to enhance the assets of the National Forest through the creation of networks of multi-use trails, campgrounds and parking and picnic areas and to build a Wilderness Visitors’ and Interpretive Center in the Town of Bland that will be a focal point for tourists seeking to learn about what the county has to offer travelers.
19. **Federal Funds Awarded for Development of Glen Alton Recreation Area** - \$800,000 has been approved by the U.S. Congress to launch a comprehensive renovation project at the Glen Alton property in the Jefferson National Forest in Giles County. The project will include the restoration of the historic lodge and caretaker’s house; upgrades to the access roads and bridges which lead to the property; construction of appropriate parking facilities; clearing of the overgrowth in the fields; cleaning and rehabilitation of all streams and ponds on the property; and the completion of a wildlife viewing trail.
20. **Cranesnest Trail to be Constructed in Dickenson County** – Federal funding in the amount of \$520,000 has been approved, at my request, for the construction of the Cranesnest Trail in Dickenson County. Once completed, the Cranesnest Trail will lead from Route 83 to the John Flannagan Reservoir and will stretch a total of 16 miles. The trail will be a multi-use hiking, biking and horse trail.

## C. ENCOURAGING SMALL BUSINESS FORMATION

1. **Incubators Let New Businesses Share Costs and Obtain Technical Assistance** – In 1998, I created regional planning task forces and launched a Ninth District-wide effort to build small business incubators as a means of expanding the number of locally-owned small businesses in the region. The construction of small business incubators within the reach of all residents will assure that technical assistance and the opportunity to reduce start-up costs are available to each person who wants to bring his or her good ideas to the commercial market. In 2005, these incubator projects advanced:



- ***Crossroads Institute Now Open:*** This summer, I participated in the opening of the new Crossroads Institute in the City of Galax. The large and comprehensive facility is now equipped to promote the launch of locally owned small businesses and to offer a wide range of educational and entrepreneurial training, counseling and assistance to the residents of Carroll and Grayson Counties, the City of Galax, Wythe, Smyth and Bland Counties. At my request, \$5.5 million in federal funding was supplied to renovate and expand the former Lowe’s building for the facility.
  - ***Virginia Highlands Incubator Opens:*** Construction is complete on the new Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator, the first building to be located in Abingdon’s new Stonemill Business and Technology Park. At my request, \$1.9 million in federal grant funding has been provided for the project, which is encouraging the birth of locally owned technology-related small businesses.
  - ***Virginia Tech KnowledgeWorks Now Complete:*** A new small business incubator is now open at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center in Blacksburg. At my request, \$2 million in federal funding was provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce to construct the \$6 million facility. KnowledgeWorks will focus on launching technology-oriented businesses.
2. **New Incubator Planned for Alleghany County/City of Covington** – I have been working with Alleghany County and City of Covington officials to develop a small business incubator which will serve both the County and the City. A feasibility study has been completed for the development of the new facility, marking the first step in building the facility.
  3. **Plans for Radford Business Technology Park Advance** – In May, I announced a federal grant in the amount of \$200,000 to the Radford University Foundation. The federal funds are being used to conduct an environmental assessment of the former St. Alban’s hospital building to enable the renovation of the property into the Business Technology Park.
  4. **Federal Grant Secured for Downtown Hillsville Revitalization Project** - \$250,000 in federal grant funding has been awarded to the Town of Hillsville for a downtown revitalization project. The funds will enable the improvement and rehabilitation of several exterior storefronts in the downtown area, the renovation of the former hotel building into apartments and the expansion of

the Beaver Creek Dam Trail. A portion of the grant funds will also be used to establish a revolving loan fund for new or expanding businesses located in downtown Hillsville.

5. **Revolving Loan Fund Established for Small Businesses in Scott County** – A federal grant in the amount of \$98,400 has been approved for the Scott County Economic Development Authority to establish a revolving loan fund for small businesses located within the County. Loans will be made to small businesses for as much as \$25,000, and the loan funds can be used for a wide range of business expansion and improvement projects.
6. **Chessie Workstation to be Developed** - At my urging, the U.S. Congress has approved \$1,040,000 in federal funding to develop the Chessie Workstation rail yard in Clifton Forge into a viable industrial site. The project presents an opportunity for new and significant economic development in Alleghany County.

#### **D. FARM ECONOMY SUPPORTED**

1. **Farm Service Agency (FSA) Offices to Remain Open** – Earlier this year, the President announced plans to close many local FSA offices across the nation. Six FSA offices serving Alleghany, Buchanan, Carroll, Grayson, Henry, Patrick, Smyth and Tazewell Counties and the City of Galax were slated for closure. I joined with my colleagues in the House of Representatives in voicing strong opposition to the proposal, citing the tremendous assistance which FSA offices provide to our region’s farmers. Due to Congressional opposition, the President’s plan has been abandoned, and all of the FSA offices serving Southwest Virginia’s farmers will remain open.
2. **Drought Disaster Assistance Sought** – I have contacted the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture urging him to declare Bland, Floyd, Giles, Lee, Patrick, Pulaski, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell and Wythe Counties to be primary disaster areas due to the recent drought conditions experienced in those localities. If approved, eligible farmers may apply to receive financial assistance from the federal government to compensate for agricultural losses.
3. **Federal Government Provides Disaster Assistance** – In October, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture declared a federal disaster due to the recent drought conditions. As a result of the declaration, farmers in Buchanan, Dickenson,

Lee and Wise Counties who have suffered crop losses caused by the drought may be eligible to receive financial assistance from the federal government.

4. **Hair Sheep Production Provides Opportunities for Farmers** – I have obtained a commitment from a locally-owned food retailer with more than 90 stores in the region to purchase ten thousand lambs annually from local hair sheep producers. Current local production of hair sheep is well below that number, and the commitment provides a guaranteed market which can now be enjoyed by hundreds of additional hair sheep producers. Whether farmers are engaged in tobacco, beef cattle or dairy production, they now have an opportunity to add hair sheep production to diversify their operations and increase their income. Anyone desiring information concerning the opportunity which the production of hair sheep creates should contact his or her local extension office.
  
5. **Biodesign and Processing Research Center to be Established in Roanoke County and Blacksburg** – The U.S. Congress has approved a federal appropriation in the amount of \$950,000 which I jointly requested with Congressman Bob Goodlatte for the establishment of the Biodesign and Processing Research Center (BPRC) which will be administered by Virginia Tech. The BPRC will enhance the capabilities and economic viability of farmers, woodland owners and wood processors by conducting research on the production of enzymes and pharmaceuticals from transgenic crops and conversion of agricultural wastes to value-added products. New developments in these areas would boost the farm economy of our region.

## **E. INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT**

1. **Funding in 2005 Gives More Southwest Virginians Access to Water and Wastewater Services** – In 2005, more than \$38 million in federal funding was awarded to construct and improve drinking water systems and public wastewater systems throughout Southwest Virginia. Obtaining the federal funding to place publicly provided drinking water in Southwest Virginia homes is a high priority of my office. More than 8,000 Southwest Virginia homes will receive new or improved publicly provided drinking water or sewer service as a result of projects launched with federal funds in 2005. In 2006, I will be seeking a comparable level of federal funding for further system development.

2. **Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment Project on Track and On Schedule** - For the eighth consecutive year, the federal government is making a major investment in the Grundy Flood Control and Redevelopment Project. At my request, the Congress has approved \$8.8 million in direct Congressional appropriations to construct the ringwall and to fund voluntary floodproofing and acquisition projects. Construction is scheduled to begin in February on the ringwall which will protect the courthouse and existing downtown structures from future flooding. At that time, work will also commence to construct the buildings which will populate the new downtown area and the Route 460 bypass.
3. **Ceres Alumni Association Receives Federal Boost** – Using \$120,000 in federal funding which I secured, the Ceres Alumni Association will renovate the gymnasium and former agriculture building in Ceres. Immediate plans for the two buildings include the replacement of the gymnasium floor which has significant termite damage. New restroom facilities will be installed in the gymnasium, and the interior of the museum will be painted and prepared for historical and cultural exhibits which are planned for the space. Outside, the deteriorating walkways, porch and steps of the two buildings will be repaired.
4. **New Pedestrian Walkway to be Constructed in Town of Pound** - \$80,000 is being supplied at my request for the construction of a pedestrian walkway along Highland Avenue in the Town of Pound. The completed sidewalk will connect one residential and business area of downtown Pound to another business area and will provide safe and convenient pedestrian access between the two.
5. **Construction Begins for New Bluefield Town Hall** – In March, I participated in the groundbreaking for the new Bluefield Town Hall, which is being constructed using \$650,000 in federal funding which I secured. The new facility will be located in the Leatherwood Development and will provide convenient access to the Town’s offices for Bluefield residents. The new Bluefield Town Hall is expected to be complete next year.
6. **Southwest Virginia Police Departments Receive Federal Funding** – Several communities throughout Southwest Virginia received a federal boost through the provision of federal grant funding for local police departments.

- ***Damascus Police Department:*** \$37,500 in federal grant funding will be used to purchase two new police vehicles for the Department. The new police vehicles will replace older vehicles.
  - ***Clintwood Police Department:*** A \$23,250 federal grant will be used to purchase and equip a 2005 four-wheel drive sports-utility vehicle for the Town's police force.
  - ***Pulaski Police Department:*** A federal grant in the amount of \$27,500 has been awarded to the Town of Pulaski's Police Department. The federal funds will be used to purchase and equip two new police vehicles for the Department.
7. **Cleveland Lifesaving Crew in Russell County to Purchase New Ambulance**  
– In May, I announced a federal grant in the amount of \$27,500 which will be used to purchase a 2005 ambulance frame. In addition, the funds will be used to refurbish the box from the 1994 ambulance which is currently in use. The box is the area in the rear of the ambulance where the emergency equipment is stored.
  8. **Town of Bluefield Receives Federal Grant to Continue Flood Mitigation Efforts** – Earlier this year, I announced a federal grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the amount of \$716,930 to the Town of Bluefield in further assistance to remedy the flooding problems experienced in the Town. The federal funds are enabling the Town to purchase and demolish the Rutherford building on Virginia Avenue and the Yost apartment buildings on Walnut Street, which are located in the downtown portion of Bluefield and have experienced repeated flooding problems.
  9. **Norton's Storm Drainage System to Undergo Upgrades** – A low-interest federal loan in the amount of \$1.6 million is the latest installment of funding to the City of Norton to make improvements to portions of its storm drainage system. New storm drains and other necessary components will be installed in the City to improve and expand the existing storm drainage system. Once the work is completed, the system will have expanded capacity to protect Norton residents and their property from damage from heavy rainfall. Last year, I secured approximately \$2.6 million for the project.

10. **Communities Receive Federal Assistance for Broadband Projects** – More than 10 years ago, I began encouraging local governments throughout the Ninth District to find a means of deploying broadband networks so that affordable high-speed Internet access would be available to businesses and residents throughout our region. My goal in making this recommendation was to set our region apart in comparison to other rural areas in the nation, with the goal of attracting new industry and creating technology-based jobs for Southwest Virginians. In 2005, federal funding has been used to support the following broadband projects:

- ***Cumberland Plateau Fiber Optic Backbone:*** Construction is now complete for the first phase of the Cumberland Plateau fiber optic backbone, which stretches from Abingdon along Route 19 into Russell County to the Cumberland Plateau Regional Industrial Park in Lebanon and along U.S. Routes 19 and 460 to the small business incubator in Richlands. Businesses and government offices which are located within 1,000 feet of the backbone’s path are eligible to be connected for high-speed Internet services. The high speed data service enabled by the backbone was a major asset in Russell County’s successful effort to attract more than 700 technology-based jobs.
- ***E-58 Fiber Optic Backbone:*** Construction has launched to deploy a fiber optic backbone along U.S. Route 58 beginning at Meadows of Dan and extending across Patrick County into Henry County and beyond. \$6 million in federal funding is being devoted to the project. The establishment of the fiber optic backbone is the first step in bringing broadband services, including high-speed Internet access, to all residents and businesses in Henry and Patrick Counties.
- ***Rose Hill Broadband:*** More than \$500,000 in federal grant funding is being provided at my request for the establishment of high-speed broadband services in the Rose Hill community of Lee County. The federal funds will be used to deploy fiber optic lines across the “last mile” to approximately 40 homes and 10 businesses. The lines will be installed along the Daniel Boone Trail from Martins Creek to Indian Creek and along the new four-lane crossing at U.S. Route 58 in Rose Hill. In addition, new computer workstations will be purchased and installed at the Rose Hill Public Library public Internet access site.

- ***Duffield Fiber Optic Network:*** The Duffield Fiber Optic Network in Scott County has been launched, and high-speed broadband services were made available in 2005 to the homes and businesses of Duffield, Thomas Village and Duffield Industrial Park. In addition, a new public Internet access site has been established at Duffield's Pioneer Center. 10 computer workstations are now available for use without charge for Scott County residents.
- ***Nickelsville Broadband:*** Work began earlier this year to establish access to high-speed Internet and other broadband services for the Nickelsville community in Scott County. The construction work is being performed by the Scott County Telephone Cooperative and is supported by a nearly \$600,000 federal grant which I helped to secure for the project.

11. **Communities Receive Federal Assistance for Fire Departments** – During 2005, I participated with a number of Ninth District fire departments in the successful effort to obtain more than \$3.6 million in federal assistance for the purchase of new equipment. Local fire departments which received federal grant funding include: Ararat, Bassett, Bland, Bristol, Brumley Gap, Burkes Garden, Cana, Castlewood, Chilhowie, Christiansburg, Council, Dublin, Eggleston, Elliston, Fairystone, Gate City, Glade Spring, Horsepasture, Jeb Stuart, McClure River, Meadows of Dan, Moorefield Store, New Castle, Pennington Gap, Poplar Hill, Radford, Sharon, Simmonsville, Tazewell, Thomas Walker #1, Washington County #1, Wise and Woolwine.
12. **Whitetop Post Office Remains Open Full-Time** – Following discussions between the U.S. Postal Service and my office, the Postal Service announced that the Whitetop Post Office will remain open on a full-time basis, with no changes to its operating schedule. This announcement assures that the residents of Whitetop will continue to have convenient access to postal services within the community with a postal facility which will be open each day during normal business hours.
13. **New River Valley Airport Port of Entry To Be Federally Funded** - At my urging, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is in the process of assuming the funding obligation for the Port of Entry and U.S. Customs House at the New River Valley Airport. This obligation had previously resided with the local governments.

14. **Federal Funding Enables Feasibility Study for Regional Water System** – A federal grant in the amount of \$72,200 is enabling the New River Valley Planning District Commission to conduct a feasibility study for a regional water system in the New River Valley. The study is examining the interconnection of the public water systems serving Giles and Pulaski Counties and the City of Radford.
15. **New Water Treatment Plant to Be Constructed in Grayson County** – At my request, the U.S. Congress has approved \$1 million in federal funding to the Virginia-Carolina Water Authority for the construction of a new water treatment plant in Grayson County. The plant will establish a permanent public water source which will serve the Town of Independence in Virginia and the Town of Sparta in North Carolina.

## **F. EDUCATION: PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION**

1. **University of Appalachia School of Pharmacy Opens in Grundy** – The new School of Pharmacy in Grundy is now open and has welcomed its inaugural class of 77 students. Using \$550,000 in a special Congressional appropriation, a portion of the Buchanan County Technology Park has been transformed into a state-of-the-art educational and training facility in which the school is housed. It is my hope that the development of the University of Appalachia will continue to include new institutions, such as a college of dentistry or a college of optometry, which will further stimulate the economic development of the Town of Grundy and Buchanan County.
2. **Virginia Tech Coal Research Program Receives Another Federal Boost** – The U.S. Department of Energy, at my request, has awarded a federal grant in the amount of \$12 million to the Center for Advanced Separation Technologies (CAST) at Virginia Tech to continue the Center’s work in developing leading edge clean coal technologies. CAST develops better methods of processing and using fine coal particles for use in power plants. The older process results in the discard of small coal particles. The CAST research is enabling the use of these otherwise wasted coal particles with major potential benefits for the coal industry.
3. **Dabney Lancaster Packaging Center Advances** – For the third year, the Congress has approved my request for funding for the new packaging program



sponsored by Dabney Lancaster Community College in Alleghany County. This year's funding in the amount of \$150,000 will be used for the final developmental phase of the project. During the course of 2006, the federal funding will be used to purchase the remaining training equipment necessary for the Packaging Center laboratory. It is expected that the Virginia Packaging Application Center will begin evening classes in the fall of 2006. Day and evening classes will be offered in the fall of 2007.

4. **House Approves Additional Funding for Virginia Tech's Bioinformatics Institute** – The U.S. House of Representatives has honored my request and has appropriated for the coming year \$5 million for the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute at Virginia Tech. The Institute is a widely acknowledged global leader in the emerging field of bioinformatics. This is the fifth year that I have obtained federal funding for Virginia Tech's Bioinformatics Institute, bringing the total federal funding to date to approximately \$20 million. As a result of this latest appropriation, the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute will be able to continue its groundbreaking work in creating a common database of information for all governmental agencies involved in the assessment of biological security threats.
5. **People, Inc. Opens New Bristol Facility** – A new Bristol branch office of People, Incorporated has opened on the Randall Street Expressway. The new facility will enable Bristol residents to take advantage of the services offered by the agency without the inconvenience of traveling the longer distance to the Abingdon office. The new Bristol office houses space for Head Start, a job training facility, and a computer lab. The facility also has office space for a Housing Counselor, a Business Development Specialist and Case Managers for People, Inc.'s child and family development programs.
6. **Computer Learning and Public Internet Access Site Opens at Old Chilhowie High School Community Center** - A new federally funded computer lab and public Internet access site has been established at the Old Chilhowie High School Community Center using a federal grant which I helped to secure from the Appalachian Regional Commission in the amount of \$43,579. The federal funds were used to purchase 19 computer workstations, a network printer, an overhead projection system and office furniture. Remaining funds are being used to equip one of the classrooms at the facility with the technology necessary to establish a distance learning center.

7. **Southwest Virginia Public Libraries Receive Federal Boost** – At my urging, a \$50,000 federal grant is being provided to allow the purchase and installation of a library automation system in seven Southwest Virginia public libraries. The new system will enable a far more rapid search of the collections held at each of the libraries. All seven libraries included in the Wythe-Grayson and Galax-Carroll regional library systems will benefit from the new library automation system.
8. **Nursing Program at University of Virginia’s College at Wise to Expand** – I have secured a federal grant in the amount of \$90,256 for the expansion of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at UVA-Wise. New educational equipment and software will be purchased to enable new course offerings.
9. **Federal Funding Announced for Appalachian Tri-College Nursing Program** – A large federal grant in the amount of \$218,076 has been awarded to the Appalachian Tri-College Nursing Program to enable alternative nursing course schedules during evenings and weekends. The Appalachian Tri-College Nursing Program serves nursing students enrolled at Southwest Virginia Community College, Virginia Highlands Community College and Mountain Empire Community College. The expanded course schedules will allow nursing students greater flexibility in determining their course loads.
10. **Southwest Virginia Colleges and Community Colleges Receive Federal Grants** – This year, the U.S. Department of Education awarded more than \$2.15 million in federal grant funding to seven institutions of higher learning in Southwest Virginia. Dabney S. Lancaster Community College, Mountain Empire Community College, Southwest Virginia Community College, Virginia Highlands Community College, Wytheville Community College, Radford University and the University of Virginia’s College at Wise were each awarded multi-year federal grants. The funds will be used for a variety of student services including financial aid and career development grants.

## **G. TRANSPORTATION: THE LINK TO A BROADER ECONOMY**

1. **Federal Funds Provided for Coalfield Connector** – The U.S. Congress has approved and the President has signed into law a federal appropriation in the amount of \$12 million for the Coalfield Connector roadway in Buchanan County. The federal appropriation opens the door for VDOT to create a near term plan to construct the road with a combination of federal and state monies.

When completed, the Coalfield Connector will make U.S. Route 460 in Virginia four lanes across the length of the road, provide easier access to the Breaks Interstate Park and constitute the first leg of the Coalfields Expressway.

2. **Route 600 Reconstruction In Smyth Now Complete** – The reconstruction of Route 600 between the Chilhowie and Konnarock communities is now finished, providing for safe and convenient access to I-81 for the residents of Konnarock, Green Cove and Whitetop. The improved roadway will also boost tourism by establishing a rapid access route to the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, Grayson Highlands State Park and the Virginia Creeper Trail from Interstate 81 at Chilhowie. More than \$19 million in federal funds were provided for the project at my request.
3. **Safety Improvements to be Studied for Chestnut Mountain Road** - \$400,000 in federal funding has been approved by Congress to design improvements along Chestnut Mountain Road between the communities of Taylors Valley and Green Cove in Washington County. In its current condition, the roadway poses a risk to school buses and emergency vehicles which routinely use it.
4. **Improving the Ninth District’s Airports** – The presence of well-developed airports is an essential tool in attracting new employers to the region. In 2005, the following successes were achieved in improving the Ninth District’s airports:
  - ***Twin County Airport:*** Using \$1.5 million in federal funding which I secured, the runway at the Twin County Airport has been widened from its current 60 feet to a total of 75 feet. The entire expanded runway surface, totaling 4,204 feet, has been repaved, including an aircraft turn-around area at the north end of the runway, and a new lighting system has been installed. To date, more than \$2.8 million has been secured from the FAA to promote improvements at the Airport.
  - ***Virginia Highlands Airport:*** The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), at my request, has approved two federal grants in the total amount of \$847,500 to further the runway lengthening project which is now underway at Virginia Highlands Airport. The project will enhance Washington County’s attractiveness to corporations looking for new locations for plants by expanding the kinds of corporate aircraft that can use the field.

- ***Buchanan/Dickenson Airport:*** I am now working with the local governments in Buchanan and Dickenson Counties to build a large new general aviation airport that will serve both counties and the Breaks Interstate Park. A feasibility study has been completed, and work has begun to determine the appropriate site for the new airport. In 2005, the Congress approved my request for \$200,000, and I will be asking for additional funding for land acquisition and detailed engineering work in 2006.
- ***Virginia Tech Airport:*** At my request, \$190,652 in federal grant funding has been provided to the Virginia Tech/Montgomery County Airport. The funding is being used to update the Airport's Master Plan which details the anticipated long-term capital needs and serves as a blueprint for future growth at the Airport.
- ***Tazewell County Airport:*** A federal grant in the amount of \$150,000 has been awarded to the Tazewell County Airport to resurface the runway and to remove obstructions along the Airport's approach path.
- ***Lee County Airport:*** Nearly \$1 million in federal grant funding has been approved to complete construction of the parallel taxiway at the Airport. Approximately one-third of the parallel taxiway was constructed using a previous federal grant. The new taxiway will minimize the amount of back taxiing, will enable more aircraft to make use of the Airport's facilities and will enhance safety for pilots and passengers.

## **H. NINTH DISTRICT CONGRESSIONAL CONFERENCES CONDUCTED IN 2005**

1. **Ninth District Burley Tobacco Growers' Conference** – In February, many of the region's burley tobacco growers attended my annual conference during which information was provided on the newly effective federal tobacco buy-out program which the Congress approved in 2004. Conference participants received detailed information about the implementation of the buyout.
2. **Annual Southwestern Virginia Technology Council Dinner** – I hosted in cooperation with the Southwestern Virginia Technology Council the group's annual dinner meeting. The meeting highlighted the Council's accomplishments during its fourth year and served as a planning session for the group's expanding role in the advancement of technology throughout the region.

3. **Virginia Coal Conference** – In conjunction with the Eastern Coal Council, I hosted a conference addressing matters of importance to the future of Virginia’s coal industry and reported on my work as Ranking Member of the Energy and Air Quality subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, including new laws which have been approved by Congress to advance clean coal technologies.
4. **Ninth District Telecommunications Conference** – In October, I hosted a region-wide Conference on Telecommunications with the theme of “Advanced Electronic Communications: Cutting Edge Enhancements in the Fields of Entertainment, Personal Communications, Broadband Applications, and Last Mile Solutions.” The many attendees at the Conference received information on upcoming opportunities for the use of electronic networks to influence economic development, business development, health care, education and personal enjoyment and the successes our region has achieved in the effort to become a rural leader nationally in the use of information technology.
5. **Ninth District Conference on Agriculture** – In November, I hosted a Ninth District Agriculture Conference themed “Growing a New Agriculture Economy.” Conference participants received information on new and emerging developments in agriculture which are benefiting farmers in Southwest Virginia, including the growing demand for locally grown fruits and vegetables, organic produce, ornamentals and specialty produce, Christmas trees, pumpkins and hair sheep. In addition, speakers provided an update on the growing aquaculture and viticulture industries in Virginia.
6. **Ninth District Conference on Faith-Based and Community Initiatives** – In July, I hosted a conference attended by regional community and religious leaders to address the availability of federal funding for the charitable activities of faith-based organizations. Conference participants received information on the availability of funding and the most effective means of accessing it.
7. **Workshops Held to Explain New Medicare Prescription Medicine Program** – In December, I hosted three workshops in the Ninth District to provide information on the new Medicare prescription medicine benefit program. A representative from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services was on-hand to provide information and answer questions about the new Medical program. In addition, experts from local agencies were available to provide one-on-one assistance to workshop participants.

## II. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

As co-founder and co-chairman of the Congressional Internet Caucus and as a senior member of the Committees on Energy and Commerce and the Judiciary, I am extensively involved in the development of federal policy for telecommunications, intellectual property and the Internet. In 2005, these policy initiatives included:

- A. **Digital Media Consumers' Rights Act** – I introduced legislation backed by a broad coalition of consumer groups and technology companies to preserve the ability of consumers to use digital media in their homes in the manner most convenient to them. Many of the uses that consumers make of music, movies or other content, such as recording tracks from a music CD they have purchased, do not violate copyright law. However, a law passed in 1998 took away many of these personal use rights for material delivered in a protected digital format. The legislation which I have drafted restores the traditional personal use rights to consumers who lawfully acquire copyrighted works.
- B. **Internet Policy Group Membership Reaches 180** – With a membership of 180 U.S. Representatives and Senators, the bi-partisan, bi-cameral Internet Caucus which I co-founded in 1996 and now-co-chair has become the most active caucus in the Congress. It is an increasingly valuable educational forum as Congress addresses a range of policy issues related to the Internet.
- C. **Advanced Internet Communications Services Act** – I have introduced legislation which would encourage the rapid deployment of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and other advanced Internet communications services like broadband video services by applying a light regulatory touch to the new technologies. The measure would encourage new investment in VoIP and enable telephone companies to offer hundreds of channels of TV services, bringing a new era of competition to the cable TV market. The bill will be the major subject of telecommunications policy discussions in 2006.
- D. **Local Satellite Service for Patrick County** – Last year, Congress approved my legislation to enable the residents of Patrick County who own satellite television dishes to obtain the Roanoke, Virginia local broadcast stations. Local Virginia-based broadcasts will be tremendously beneficial to the satellite customers who receive them, and I am working closely with both satellite carriers and Roanoke television stations to ensure that Patrick County residents will receive these stations as quickly as possible.

**E. Universal Service Reform** – I have proposed legislation to update and ensure the sustainability of the Universal Service Fund (USF), which helps defray the cost of providing local telephone service in rural and other hard to serve areas. A variety of new providers of voice services which are exempt from making payments into the USF, such as VoIP providers, have entered the market, resulting in greater USF funding burdens being placed on traditional service providers. My measure responds to these developments and will ensure the continued availability of the USF to support the provision of communications services in rural and underserved areas. It broadens the base of contributions into the fund, controls distributions from the fund and allows use of the fund for broadband deployment.

### **III. HEALTH CARE: IMPROVING ACCESS FOR SOUTHWEST VIRGINIANS**

- A. One Care Program is Launched Regionally** – In the fall, I joined with officials from Virginia Tech, People, Inc. and the Washington County Department of Social Services in the regional launch of the One Care program. One Care is an innovative non-profit organization comprised of more than 40 public and private health and human service organizations created to improve access to a variety of social services for those in need. One Care will use a computer database engineered by Virginia Tech known as COSMOS (Community Service Management System). The database will serve as an information clearinghouse to enable Southwest Virginia residents, including those who are uninsured or underinsured, to obtain access to the health care and human services which are generally available to those in need in the region.
- B. Clinch River Health Services Clinic in Dungannon Receives Federal Boost** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its Rural Development Agency, has awarded a \$37,500 federal grant to the Clinch River Health Services Clinic in Dungannon. The federal funds are being used for the purchase of electronic medical records computer software and will enable the medical personnel at the clinic to efficiently maintain the medical records of patients at the clinic.
- C. Telemedicine Service Goes Online at Troutdale Medical Center** - A telemedicine link has been established with \$28,050 in federal funding between the Troutdale Medical Center in Grayson County and the University of Virginia’s hospital in Charlottesville. Those residing near the Troutdale clinic may now obtain advanced medical consultations from the nation’s top experts through a simple visit to the local medical office. The costly and time-consuming trip to the UVA hospital in Charlottesville can be avoided.
- D. Dickenson Community Hospital to Construct Helicopter Landing Pad** – At my urging, a federal grant in the amount of \$50,000 has been awarded to the Dickenson Community Hospital to construct a helicopter landing pad which will improve the safety of MedEvac flights landing and taking off at the hospital. A walkway leading from the helicopter pad to the hospital will also be constructed.
- E. Highlands Community Services Board to Build New Building in Abingdon** – A \$9.2 million low-interest federal loan is being provided to the Highlands Community Services Board for the construction of a new building in the Town of



Abingdon. HCSB provides mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services to residents of Washington County, the City of Bristol and the surrounding areas. Once constructed, the new facility will house both the administrative offices of HCSB and the practitioners' offices for health services which are provided through HCSB.

- F. **Ground Broken for Assisted Living Center in Wise** – Construction is underway for The Laurels assisted living facility in Wise. Once completed, the facility will include 36 beds in the main facility and 12 beds in a separate and secure Alzheimer's unit. The facility will also feature indoor and outdoor common areas for both portions of the assisted living center. A \$5 million federal loan is being provided to Freewill Baptist Ministries for the construction of the new center.
  
- G. **New River Health Care Complex in Giles Receives Federal Boost** - In September, I announced the provision of federal funding in the amount of \$66,500 to the New River Health Care Complex nursing home in Giles County. Using the federal funds, the nursing home will install five new heat pumps and purchase a new van which will be used to transport elderly residents to and from the hospital.
  
- H. **New Beginnings Drug Treatment Center Receives Additional Federal Funding** – At my request, the Appalachian Regional Commission provided a federal grant in the amount of \$50,000 to the New Beginnings of Southwest Virginia organization. The federal funds will be used to support a portion of the first-year operating costs for the new residential drug treatment facility in the Town of Dryden. Last year, I announced an allocation of federal funding in the amount of \$375,000 which was used to purchase the former nursing home facility in which New Beginnings is now located.

## IV. 2005 LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

- A. **Congress Approves Major Coal Stimulus in Energy Bill** – The Congress has enacted and the President has signed into law comprehensive energy legislation which contains a major coal industry stimulus which I authored. The measure includes a total of \$2.9 billion in tax benefits to incent electric utilities to use a new generation of clean coal technologies and to use coal in their new generating units. As more emphasis is placed on coal for electricity generation, some of the upward pressure on natural gas prices will be relieved.
- B. **Bill Introduced to Designate New Wilderness and National Scenic Areas in Southwest Virginia** – Earlier this year, I introduced with U.S. Senator John Warner the Virginia Ridge and Valley Wilderness and National Scenic Areas Act to designate additional wilderness and national scenic areas on national forest land in Southwest Virginia. The measure would protect approximately 55,000 acres of Southwest Virginia’s national forest land. Wilderness and National Scenic Areas provide protection for the forest’s natural habitat while enabling and encouraging continued use of the areas for outdoor recreational activities such as backpacking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, hiking, camping and canoeing. Because of its major tourism enhancement benefits, our legislation is broadly supported by local governments and conservation groups throughout the region, and its passage will be a priority of my office during the upcoming session of Congress.
- C. **Free Flow of Information Act Introduced** – In February, I introduced the Free Flow of Information Act of 2005 which will advance the public’s right of access to information of broad public interest by empowering reporters to refuse to reveal the sources of their information in federal court proceedings. Thirty-one states and the District of Columbia currently have statutes protecting reporters from the compelled disclosure of their sources of information; however, no similar protection exists in the federal courts. My legislation will establish a federal shield for reporters, thereby protecting the public’s right to know.
- D. **Class Action Reform Measure Enacted into Law** – In February, the Congress approved a class action reform measure which I authored with fellow Virginia Congressman Bob Goodlatte. Our legislation permits removal to federal court of state filed class action cases which are national in scope. It will result in fewer frivolous lawsuits and a fairer system for those plaintiffs with legitimate claims involved in class action proceedings.

**E. Legislation Introduced to Improve National Preparedness During Times of Natural Disaster** – Following the Hurricane Katrina disaster, I joined with my colleagues in introducing the National Emergency Management Improvement Act. If enacted, the measure would restore FEMA as an independent federal agency as it was in the 1990s, led by experts in emergency management, that reports directly to the President. The reforms would ensure that our nation’s federal response during a time of disaster is appropriately coordinated to ensure that citizens in need receive adequate assistance.

# CONGRESSMAN RICK BOUCHER

2187 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C, 20515

(202) 225-3861

email: *Ninthnet@mail.house.gov*

Website: *www.house.gov/boucher*



## Constituent Service Offices:

188 East Main Street

Abingdon, Virginia 24210

(276) 628-1145

One Cloverleaf Square, Suite C1

Big Stone Gap, Virginia 24219

(276) 523-5450

106 N. Washington Avenue

P.O. Box 1268

Pulaski, Virginia 24301

(540) 980-4310