



2009 Northwest Arkansas Federal Legislative Issues

Bella Vista Bypass – We strongly support the discretionary grant application that the Highway Departments of Arkansas and Missouri jointly will submit to the U.S. Department of Transportation for the Bella Vista Bypass. They will be requesting up to \$300 million from the “Supplemental Discretionary Grants” program established in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to complete an approximately 20-mile interstate-quality highway known as the “Bella Vista Bypass”, one of the few remaining incomplete segments of the future Interstate 49 corridor.

Federal Highway Reauthorization - We support the Northwest Arkansas Council’s following requests:

- \$50 million for interchange improvements and widenings on **Interstate 540 in Washington and Benton Counties**; and,
- \$50 million for right-of-way acquisition and construction of the **Springdale Northern Bypass** (also referred to as the “Highway 412 Bypass”) in Washington and Benton Counties.



Card Check/Employee Free Choice Legislation - We oppose S. 560 and H.R. 1409, the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA). This legislation, if enacted, will have a significant and potentially devastating impact on businesses of all sizes.

National Commission on State Workers’ Compensation Laws - We oppose H.R. 635, the “National Commission on State Workers’ Compensation Laws Act of 2009.” The legislation would establish a national commission to study and evaluate the adequacy of state workers’ compensation laws and report back to Congress its findings and recommendations.

Workers’ Compensation affects every business in Arkansas and consequently is a top priority issue. Workers’ Comp reform was passed in 1993. It ended years of contention in the state capitol over workers’ comp issues and restored stability to a volatile market. Since the reforms were passed the Arkansas State Chamber/AIA and the Arkansas AFL-CIO have negotiated changes to our workers’ comp laws. These negotiations have resulted in a peaceful political environment as well as create a state workers’ comp system that is working very well. Employers have enjoyed approximately a 60% decrease in premiums since the reforms were passed while laborers have enjoyed a 100% increase in benefits. We fear the establishment of a national commission to develop congressional recommendations is primarily aimed at undermining state-based workers’ compensation systems.

Mark to Market – We are concerned that “Mark to Market” enforcement on performing loans and non-risky customers are putting a hold on capital that would be used to help fuel a recovery in Arkansas. We ask that additional communication be made to local and regional banks in Arkansas and northwest Arkansas regarding recent announced changes.

Other Projects of Interest:

Northwest Arkansas Conservation Authority (NACA) EPA issue: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has objected to NACA and Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality proposal to set the treatment facility's discharge limit for phosphorus at one milligram per liter. The EPA contends that the Authority should meet a 0.10 milligram per liter discharge level. NACA and ADEQ have argued that the Authority should be treated the same as the other municipal wastewater treatment plants that discharge into the Illinois River watershed, which have a one milligram per liter discharge limit for phosphorus. This discharge level resulted from negotiations between the state of Oklahoma and municipalities with a wastewater treatment plant in the Illinois River. The phosphorus limit is scheduled to be reconsidered by all related parties in 2012. The Authority and ADEQ requested EPA approval for issuing a permit at the current one milligram per liter limit with the understanding that the discharge limit could change in 2012. The EPA denied this request. ADEQ has informed the Authority that they will not receive a discharge permit until the EPA's objections are addressed and some resolution is reached.

Arkansas World Trade Center

Northwest Arkansas Community College

Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport

Rogers Airport

Siloam Springs – Sewer treatment plant