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**Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works  
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**406 Dirksen Senate Office Building**

*Remarks as prepared for delivery*

Thank you Chairman Boxer, Ranking Member Inhofe, and Members of this Committee for the opportunity to testify today. I am here today to urge the Senate to reauthorize the Economic Development Administration and to increase funding for this critical Federal agency.

My name is LaVern W. Phillips. As President of the Woodward Industrial Foundation in Woodward, Okla., I am an economic and community development specialist for Woodward and Northwest Oklahoma. I previously served as Chairman of the Governor's Economic Development Team for the State of Oklahoma.

The EDA directly supports important economic projects affecting the citizens of the United States, and it also provides funding for the Economic Development Districts that plan economic strategies for their areas. Many small, rural communities simply can't afford to develop their own economic plans.

The EDA supports a professional planner at the Oklahoma Economic Development Authority who brings the region together behind development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. In my position with the Woodward Industrial Foundation, I work directly with the EDA district on this regional plan.

Madam Chairman, we all know how important it is to preserve rural American society, and the EDA is an essential funding resource and partner for rural communities in that endeavor. Our experience in Northwest Oklahoma is a good example.

Woodward is the regional hub of Northwest Oklahoma, and community leaders have worked hard to expand and diversify financial opportunity for residents, especially for our young people. Their diligence has paid off, and our region has reversed the loss of population common in many rural areas. Now, we are taking the next step by providing easier access to higher education.

Intensive studies in 2000 and 2004, sponsored by the City of Woodward and coordinated by the Oklahoma Community Institute, identified the need for a multipurpose higher education and conference center campus. The initiative is now called the Woodward Community Campus Project.

Within the next few months, the City of Woodward will begin construction of a 36,000 square-foot multipurpose conference and educational center on 40 acres of prime land within the city limits, adjacent to the USDA Southern Plains Range Research Station.

Next door, Northwestern Oklahoma State University has just completed construction of a 22,000 square-foot Woodward branch to provide higher education opportunities for full-time students and younger married students working to support their families.

These two facilities will be linked together via interactive television and video conferencing with Northwestern Oklahoma State University's main unit in Alva. The Woodward Community Campus Project will offer academic, entrepreneurial, workforce and

economic development programs to address problems facing rural communities. The facilities will open up career options so people can remain in rural Northwestern Oklahoma.

The EDA is providing \$1 million for construction of the public infrastructure needed by the Woodward Community Campus. This is only about 15.5 percent of the cost of the conference and education center, with the City of Woodward committing the remaining 84.5 percent, or \$5.45 million.

But this is the main point I want to make today: That relatively small percentage of EDA funding was essential to the success of the project. Without the EDA's help, the Woodward Community Campus and the creation of good, new jobs simply wouldn't happen.

So, let me use this forum to thank the EDA and to tell of the positive experience I have had working with the agency. The EDA Austin Regional Office staff and their Regional Director, Pedro R. Garza, are true professionals, dedicated to job creation and preserving rural America.

I respectfully urge this committee to fully fund the U.S. Economic Development Administration and to adopt a five-year reauthorization bill that provides stability and policy direction for the agency.

Thank you, Madam Chairman, Senator Inhofe, and other Members of this Committee for this opportunity to testify. I welcome your questions.