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Agricultural Outlook Forum
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Presented: March 1-2, 2007

MAKING RURAL TOWNS MORE VIABLE: A LOOK AT BROADBAND, HEALTHCARE & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Thomas Dorr
Under Secretary for Rural Development, USDA

USDA Rural Development

Committed to the future of rural communities.

-- Improving the quality of life of all rural Americans

-- Increasing economic opportunity in rural America

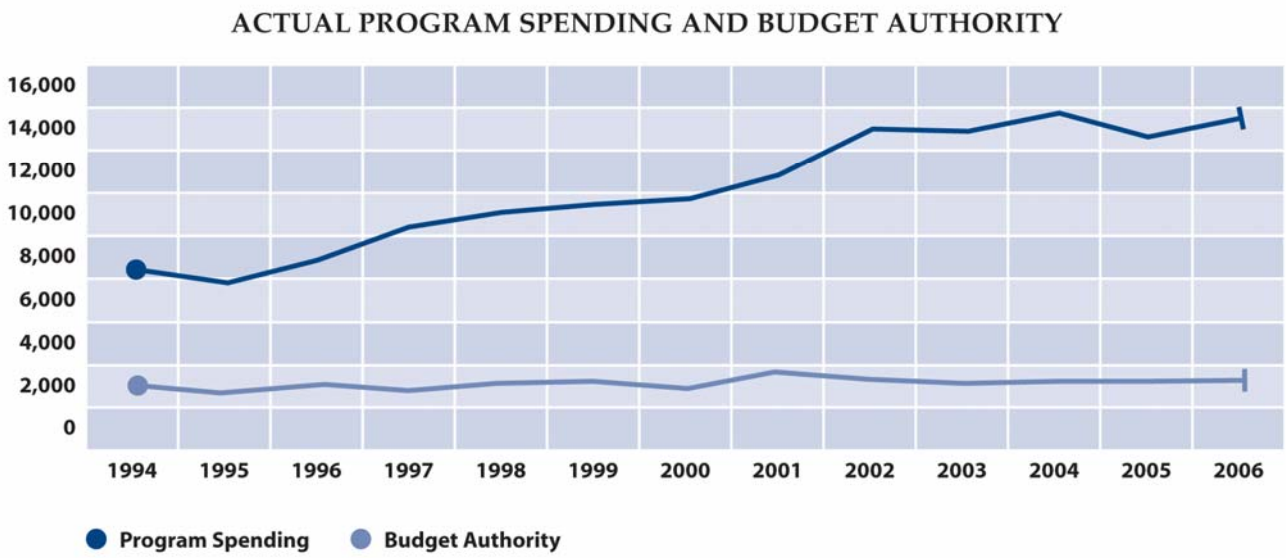
Bush Administration Investments

Invested over $76 Billion in six years – Creating or Saving over 1.5 million jobs

Through the delivery of over 40 Rural Development Programs:

- Housing
- Utilities
- Business

Investments Trends



Rural Housing Programs

$24.7 Billion – 353,000 single-family homes

$1.7 Billion - 3,537 fire, rescue, and public safety vehicles, buildings, equipment

$1.28 Billion – Healthcare facilities Serving 8.2 million rural residents and providing telemedicine capabilities to 2,226 rural health institutions.

Rural Utilities Programs

$22 Billion - Electric

- Over 1 million new customers receiving electric service

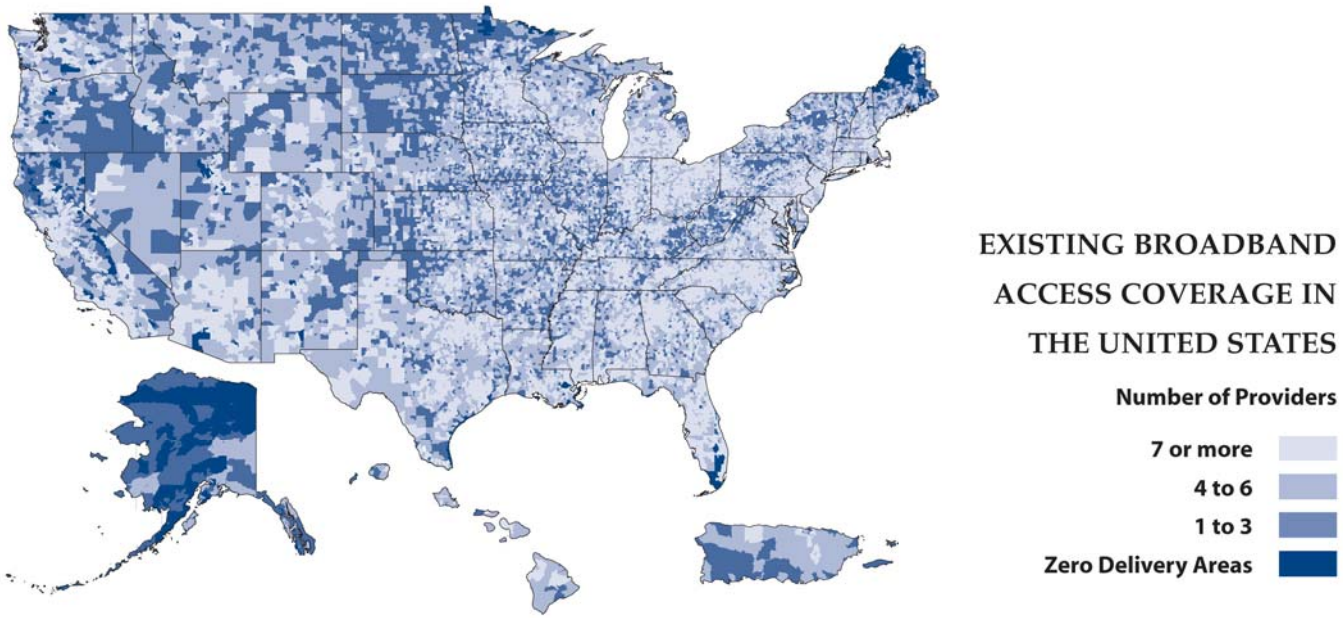
$9.1 Billion - Community Infrastructure

- Over 7,403 water/wastewater projects

$5.7 Billion -Telecommunications

- Over 1.9 million new broadband capable subscribers

Broadband in Rural America



Access to over 40 Percent of rural America

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Rural Business and Cooperative Programs

$5.9 Billion -- Business Loans

$482.1 Million – renewable energy/energy efficiencies – over 1,000 projects. Leveraged $1.5 billion in private investments.

2007 Farm Bill

Rural Development

- Consolidate Rural Development programs to increase flexibility and efficiency

- Provide $1.6 billion in loans to complete the rehabilitation of all 1,283 certified rural Critical Access Hospitals

2007 Farm Bill

Rural Development

- Provide an additional $500 million to reduce the backlog of rural infrastructure projects.
  - Water/wastewater loans and grants
  - Emergency water assistance grants
  - Community Facilities loans and grants – first responders
  - Distance learning and telemedicine grants

2007 Farm Bill

Energy

- Provide $500 million for rural alternative energy and energy efficiency grants
- Provide $2.1 billion in loan guarantees to support cellulosic ethanol projects in rural areas
- Provide $150 million for biomass research competitive grants, focusing on cellulosic ethanol
- Provide $500 million to create a Bioenergy and Bioproducts Research program

Summary

- USDA Rural Development is the leading Advocate for rural America

- USDA Rural Development has an unmatched program distribution system