



PUBLIC TESTIMONY

PREPARED FOR THE

**PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

AMERICAN RECOVERY & REINVESTMENT ACT

AS PRESENTED ON

NOVEMBER 5, 2009

AT THE

**PENNSYLVANIA CAREERLINK, INDIANA COUNTY
300 INDIAN SPRINGS ROAD
INDIANA, PA 15701**

BY

**RODNEY D. RUDDOCK, CHAIRMAN
INDIANA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GOOD MORNING! CHAIRMAN CURTIS, MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, WELCOME TO INDIANA COUNTY! THE CHRISTMAS TREE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD! AND ALSO THE PROUD HOME OF INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA (IUP). MY NAME IS RODNEY (ROD) D. RUDDOCK. I CURRENTLY SERVE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE INDIANA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS. ON BEHALF OF MY FELLOW COLLEAGUES, COMMISSIONER DAVID FRICK AND COMMISSIONER PATRICIA EVANKO, I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND MY APPRECIATION TO THE PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT TESTIMONY ON THE AMERICAN RECOVERY & REINVESTMENT ACT. MY TESTIMONY THIS MORNING IS ON BEHALF OF THE NEARLY 90,000 INDIANA COUNTY RESIDENTS, AND ON BEHALF OF OUR 38 MUNICIPALITIES, 7 SCHOOL DISTRICTS, AND MANY OTHER ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS THAT ARE TIRELESSLY CRUNCHING BUDGETS AND LOOKING FOR RESOURCES IN ORDER TO SIMPLY SURVIVE.

ABOUT THIS TIME LAST YEAR, THE NATION SPOKE AND IT SPOKE LOUD AND CLEAR! PEOPLE WANTED CHANGE, A NEW DIRECTION. THE ECONOMY WAS EXTREMELY POOR AND WE

WERE IN THE MIDST OF A WORLD-WIDE FINANCIAL MELTDOWN. SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE. FIRST, WE NEEDED SOME LEVELING OFF, A PLATEAU, AND SOME MAY SAY JUST HITTING BOTTOM. PRESIDENT OBAMA PROVIDED A DIRECTION TO MOVE THE NATION FORWARD. SOME ARGUE THAT THE PLAN WOULD COST TOO MUCH AND THE NATION COULD NOT AFFORD IT. OTHERS SAID THE PLAN WAS NOT AMBITIOUS ENOUGH. INDIANA COUNTY WAS EXCITED TO HEAR OF THE PLANS WHICH WERE INITIALLY INTRODUCED AS PART OF THE FEDERAL PLAN. LOOKING LOCALLY, AT THE END OF 2008 AND INTO EARLY 2009, INDIANA COUNTY WAS IN THE FINAL STAGES OF CONSTRUCTING A NEW \$28 MILLION DOLLAR JAIL FACILITY. WE DID NOT HAVE \$28 MILLION DOLLARS IN THE BANK, BUT WE PLANNED FOR THIS MAJOR UNDERTAKING AND SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE JAIL PROJECT IN FEBRUARY 2009. AND KNOWING THAT WE HAD A NUMBER OF OTHER COUNTY CAPITAL PROJECTS TO FOLLOW, INCLUDING A FEDERALLY MANDATED FCC EMERGENCY RADIO COMMUNICATIONS PLAN ESTIMATED AT \$16,000,000 AND IN PLACE BY 2012, WE WERE OPTIMISTIC THAT WE WOULD BEGIN TO REBOUND. ALTHOUGH I WORRY ABOUT WHAT THE NATIONAL DEBT WILL DO TO MY GRANDCHILDREN AND GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN, I WAS ADMITTEDLY VERY EXCITED ABOUT

THE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS THAT THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS PLAN WOULD OR COULD PROVIDE TO THE COMMONWEALTH. WE HAVE ALL EXPERIENCED DRAMATIC REVENUE REDUCTIONS, NOT ONLY INDIANA COUNTY BUT OUR LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES, LIBRARIES, AUTHORITIES, POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS, COMMUNITY AGENCIES, ET. AL AS WELL. AS I CURRENTLY UNDERSTAND IT, ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE ARRA FUNDING HAS BEEN SPENT. AT THIS TIME, I HAVE MIXED EMOTIONS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE ARRA FUNDING TO DATE, AS I WILL ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN.

CURRENTLY I SERVE ON THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION (SPC), WHICH IS OUR MPO, OR METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION THAT ASSISTS IN THE PLANNING OF REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DOLLARS. SPC IS COMPRISED OF A 10-COUNTY REGION AND THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH. SPC COORDINATES THE PLANNING ACTIVITIES WITH THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (PENNDOT), SPECIFICALLY WITH THREE PENNDOT DISTRICTS 10, 11 AND 12. INDIANA COUNTY IS PART OF PENNDOT DISTRICT 10. AS DISCUSSIONS WERE INITIATED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR AND THROUGH FEBRUARY 2009, I WAS VERY ENCOURAGED WITH THE PREPARATION AND

COORDINATION AMONG ALL ENTITIES TO PRIORITIZE TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS IN THE REGION. SPC STAFF, ALONG WITH THE PENNDOT DISTRICT EXECUTIVE AND STAFF FACILITATED DISCUSSIONS WITH THE COMMISSIONERS OFFICE, PLANNING DEPARTMENT AND PPP TO DEVELOP A LIST OF CANDIDATE PROJECTS FOR ARRA FUNDING CONSIDERATION. TIME WAS OF THE ESSENCE, GIVEN THE TIGHT DEADLINES THAT WERE PART OF THE LEGISLATION. TO DATE, APPROXIMATELY \$18,491,275 ARRA DOLLARS HAVE BEEN COMMITTED TO VARIOUS ROAD AND BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS IN INDIANA COUNTY, NAMELY:

- 1. U.S. 119 LUCERNE ROAD TO SR 56 – \$906,672**
- 2. CHESTNUT RIDGE BRIDGE WEST BOUND – \$3,474,054**
- 3. CHESTNUT RIDGE BRIDGE EAST BOUND – \$3,474,054**
- 4. U.S. 422 SECTION 6 MID-BAY CRACK – \$2,941,495**
- 5. PA 403 CLYMER BRIDGE – \$7,695,000**

IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT APPROXIMATELY 146 (CONSTRUCTION AND CONSTRUCTION-RELATED) JOBS HAVE BEEN CREATED AND/OR RETAINED AS A RESULT OF THE ABOVE PROJECTS, WITH SOME PROJECTS STILL BEING COMPLETED AND OR YET TO BE FORMALLY UNDERWAY (CLYMER BRIDGE). I CANNOT THANK PENNDOT AND SPC ENOUGH FOR THEIR

CONTINUED LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE ARRA PROCESS, AS WELL AS DELIVERING NEEDED PROJECTS FOR OUR COMMUNITY. WITHOUT PENNDOTS ADVANCED PLANNING AND THE SECURING OF ARRA FUNDING, IT MAY HAVE TAKEN MANY YEARS OR MORE TO GET THIS WORK COMPLETED.

I MUST ALSO APPLAUD PENNVEST. INDIANA COUNTY HAS BEEN FORTUNATE OVER THE YEARS TO OBTAIN FUNDING THROUGH A NUMBER OF OUR AUTHORITIES TO IMPLEMENT CLEAN WATER AND WASTE WATER (SEWER) PROJECTS. ONE OF OUR PRIORITY PROJECTS OVER THE LAST COUPLE YEARS HAS BEEN THE SOUTHERN INDIANA COUNTY SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT PROJECT, WHICH IS OWNED BY THE BLAIRSVILLE MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY (BMA), BUT ALSO ENCOMPASSES PART OF BURRELL TOWNSHIP. BURRELL TOWNSHIP HAS SEEN GROWTH OVER THE YEARS WITH A BUSINESS PARK EXPANSION, WHICH HAS KOEZ, KOIZ, AND KIZ DESIGNATIONS, COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL DEVELOPMENTS, A NEW MEDICAL CENTER, A NEW HOTEL AND NEW HOUSING SITES ALL ALONG THE U.S. ROUTE 22 CORRIDOR. THE BMA SUBMITTED AN APPLICATION TO PENNVEST EARLIER THIS YEAR AND HAS BEEN AWARDED FUNDING TOTALING MORE THAN \$13.4 MILLION, WITH NEARLY \$10.5 MILLION AS A GRANT FROM ARRA FUNDING. THE BMA IS

ALSO GOING TO ADDRESS LONG-STANDING ISSUES WITH ITS COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS, OR CSOs. THESE CSOs AS WELL AS THE CAPACITY ISSUE AT THE SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT WERE ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS, BUT WOULD ALSO INHIBIT FUTURE GROWTH IN SOUTHERN INDIANA COUNTY. AGAIN, WITHOUT ARRA, THIS PROJECT WOULD HAVE BEEN COST PROHIBITIVE AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS WOULD NOT BE REALIZED.

WE WERE PLEASED TO LEARN THAT ARRA FUNDING WOULD BE DISTRIBUTED BY FORMULA THROUGH THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM. ARRA FUNDING WILL RECEIVE THE MONIKER OF CDBG-R, WITH "R" OBVIOUSLY BEING FOR "RECOVERY & REINVESTMENT".

INDIANA COUNTY IS NOT A FEDERAL ENTITLEMENT COMMUNITY; THEREFORE, OUR CDBG FUNDS ARE DISTRIBUTED THROUGH THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (PA DCED). INDIANA COUNTY AVERAGES ROUGHLY \$350,000 ANNUALLY IN CDBG FUNDING. IN 2009, IT IS APPROXIMATELY \$345,000. UNFORTUNATELY, PRIMARILY DUE TO THE STATE BUDGET IMPASSE, THE CDBG CONTRACTS HAVE NOT BEEN ISSUED. NORMALLY, CONTRACTING OCCURS IN AUGUST OR SEPTEMBER OF EACH

YEAR. WE ARE THEREFORE BEHIND THE ADMINISTRATIVE POWER CURVE. INDIANA COUNTY HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT DUE TO ARRA FUNDING THAT IT WILL RECEIVE APPROXIMATELY AN ADDITIONAL \$80,320, WHICH WILL BE CDBG-R. THIRTY SIX OF 38 MUNICIPALITIES WILL COMPETE FOR THESE LIMITED DOLLARS. ADDITIONALLY, WITH PREVAILING WAGE, LEAD BASED PAINT RULES, CDBG REQUIREMENTS IN GENERAL, NOW LAYERED WITH ARRA RULES AND PROCEDURES, IT MAKES IT EXTREMELY CHALLENGING TO DEVELOP PROJECTS AND BUDGETS THAT ARE COMPATIBLE, PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE DEMAND. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE THESE CHALLENGES AND ISSUES, WE WILL FIND A WAY TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE END. EARLIER IN MY REMARKS, I MENTIONED THE BROADBAND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY. I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW EXCITED WE WERE TO LEARN OF THE MONIES WHICH WERE EARMARKED FOR BROADBAND AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL. WE IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO DEVELOP A REGIONAL INITIATIVE TO SECURE THESE DOLLARS. INDIANA JOINED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ARMSTRONG COUNTY TO PROVIDE A MUNICIPALLY-OWNED, MULTI-SERVICE CARRIER GRADE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK – BEING REFERRED TO AS THE REGIONAL BROADBAND ALLIANCE (RBA). THE RBA HAS SUBMITTED AN \$18,742,488 GRANT APPLICATION TO

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION (NTIA), SPECIFICALLY THROUGH THE BROADBAND TECHNOLOGIES OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM (BTOP), WHICH IS SUPPORTED THROUGH ARRA FUNDING. THE TWO COUNTIES WILL PROVIDE A 20% CASH MATCH OF \$4,685,622 FOR A TOTAL PROJECT OF \$23,428,110. THE RBA APPLICATION HAS RECEIVED A HIGH RATING FROM NTIA IN THE FIRST ROUND OF THE REVIEW PROCESS AND HAS NOW MOVED TO THE DUE DILIGENCE PHASE FOR CONSIDERATION OF FUNDING THROUGH THE BTOP. THE RBA WILL ACCOMPLISH PRECISELY WHAT THE STATUTORY PURPOSES OF THE BTOP PROGRAM REQUIRE BY DEPLOYING THE COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE TO PROVIDE AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE, RELIABLE BROADBAND SERVICE BY MULTIPLE CARRIERS TO THE UNSERVED AND UNDERSERVED AREAS IN THE TWO-COUNTY REGION, THEIR RESPECTIVE COMMUNITY ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS AND OUR PUBLIC SAFETY RESPONDERS.

THE RBA WILL SPUR ECONOMIC GROWTH, INNOVATION AND JOB CREATION THROUGHOUT THIS AND ADJACENT AREAS OF THE COMMONWEALTH. THIS PROLIFERATION OF AFFORDABLE AND RELIABLE BROADBAND ACCESS WILL IMPACT

OUR COMMUNITIES IN A VARIETY OF POSITIVE WAYS RANGING FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OF A WORLD-CLASS WORKFORCE IN THE AREA TO PROVIDING A COMMUNICATION PLATFORM RESHAPING HOW HEALTHCARE AND EDUCATION ARE DELIVERED IN THE REGION.

THE RBA IS SHOVEL-READY AND WILL PROVIDE RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE AND SUSTAINABLE BROADBAND SERVICE TO MORE THAN 75 GOVERNMENTAL UNITS, 4,486 BUSINESSES, 63,128 HOUSEHOLDS, 47 EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES, 41 CRITICAL COMMUNITY FACILITIES, 33 ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS AND 100 PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES ACROSS THE TWO-COUNTY REGION. THE RBA CREATES A BRIDGE TO THE DIGITAL DIVIDE WITHIN PENNSYLVANIA. WITH FUNDING FROM ARRA THROUGH THE BTOP PROGRAM AND 20% CASH MATCHING FUNDS FROM ARMSTRONG AND INDIANA COUNTIES, RBA WILL DEPLOY THE COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE WHERE PRIVATE COMPANIES WOULD NOT - AN INVESTMENT IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND AN INVESTMENT FOR PENNSYLVANIA. BROADBAND ACCESS IS VITAL TO THE FUTURE SECURITY OF ARMSTRONG AND INDIANA COUNTIES AND IS CRITICAL TO OUR ABILITY TO SPUR JOB CREATION, STIMULATE LONG-TERM ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR

RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES. UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVE ALSO LEARNED THAT THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA THROUGH ITS REVIEW OF THE BTOP APPLICATION HAS NOT RANKED THE RBA PROJECT AS EITHER “HIGHLY RECOMMENDED” OR “SUPPORTED” IN A LETTER TO THE NTIA. WITHOUT THE ARRA FUNDING THROUGH BTOP, THIS AMBITIOUS AND NECESSARY PROJECT CANNOT AND WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.

I HAVE TALKED ABOUT CAPITAL-RELATED PROJECTS THUS FAR, BUT I WANT TO SPEND SOME TIME HIGHLIGHTING SOME OF THE PEOPLE ORIENTED ASPECTS OF ARRA FUNDING. FIRST, I WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE IN SOME WAY THE BENEFITS THAT ARRA FUNDING IS ALREADY HELPING MANY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN INDIANA COUNTY, I.E. THROUGH TAX RELIEF – 36,740; UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION – 1,800; HEALTH INSURANCE FOR UNEMPLOYED THROUGH COBRA – 2,900; HEALTH INSURANCE FOR LOW INCOME CHILDREN AND ADULTS THROUGH MEDICAL ASSISTANCE –12,819; CHILDREN’S HEALTH INSURANCE THROUGH CHIP AND COVER ALL KIDS – 1,427; AND FOOD ASSISTANCE (FOOD STAMPS) – 7,555 (SOURCE WWW.RECOVERY.PA.GOV FOR INDIANA COUNTY). THE

REPORTED NUMBERS ARE ONLY ESTIMATES, BUT THE NUMBERS ARE STAGGERING NONE THE LESS.

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF ARRA FUNDING, INDIANA COUNTY WILL BE ADMINISTERING A “HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND RAPID RE-HOUSING PROGRAM” AS PART OF A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT WITH THE INDIANA COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM (ICCAP). YOU HAVE ALREADY HEARD FROM LORNA VITE, BUT IN SUMMARY THE \$443,551 TOTAL PROJECT WILL RECEIVE \$354,951 OF ARRA FUNDING. ONE ISSUE OF COMMON INTEREST IS THE LIMITED TIME WHICH THE PROCESS ALLOWS TO FRAME A LOCAL RESPONSE...STATE SUSPENSE DATES MUST BE MORE REASONABLE.

THE TRI-COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD, OR WIB SERVES BUTLER, ARMSTRONG, AND INDIANA COUNTIES, WHICH ADMINISTERS TRAINING FUNDING THROUGH THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT (WIA). FEDERAL FUNDING THROUGH TITLE I ARE TARGETED TO WIA-ELIGIBLE ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER AND YOUTH RECIPIENTS. THROUGH AS RECENT AS OCTOBER 2ND, THE WIA-ELIGIBLE ADULT PROGRAM HAS BEEN AWARDED \$380,537 AND HAS ESTABLISHED 37 INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS; THE WIA-ELIGIBLE

DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAM HAS BEEN AWARDED \$746,864 AND HAS ESTABLISHED 55 INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS; AND WIA-ELIGIBLE YOUTH PROGRAM HAS BEEN AWARDED \$997,009 AND HAS PROVIDED 222 YOUTH SUMMER WORK EXPERIENCES. AS A FORMER EDUCATOR AND ADMINISTRATOR IN THE INDIANA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT, IT IS VERY REWARDING TO SEE YOUNG PEOPLE FIND THEIR AREA OF INTEREST AND EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION IN SOME SECONDARY ADVANCEMENT, WHETHER IT BE A FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION, TECHNICAL SCHOOL, OR APPRENTICE PROGRAM. FURTHERMORE, AS JOBS DISAPPEAR, IT IS SO VITALLY IMPORTANT TO THE INDIVIDUAL, BUT ALSO TO THE COMMUNITY THAT DISLOCATED WORKERS OR ADULTS REENTERING THE WORKFORCE ARE RETRAINED TO PROVIDE SKILL SETS THAT ARE NEEDED IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE. INDIANA COUNTY IS FORTUNATE TO CERTAINLY HAVE IUP, BUT ALSO OUR TECHNICAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE. OUR LOCAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS ARE MORE THAN WILLING TO PROVIDE CUSTOMIZED JOB TRAINING AS INDUSTRY DEMANDS. ARRA FUNDING WILL HOPEFULLY PUT A DENT INTO THE NEEDS OF THE

INDIVIDUALS AND PROVIDE SEEDS FOR FUTURE ECONOMIC GROWTH.

WITH HALLOWEEN NOW BEHIND US, IT SHOULD SERVE AS A REMINDER THAT IT IS CERTAINLY NOT ALL DOOM AND GLOOM! WE SEE A LOT OF OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIANA COUNTY IN THE COMING YEARS! THE MARCELLUS SHALE PLAY SHOULD PROVIDE JOBS TO THE COMMONWEALTH AND IN THIS REGION IN PARTICULAR.

I WISH TO AGAIN THANK THE HOUSE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT THIS TESTIMONY. I, ALONG WITH MY FELLOW COMMISSIONERS, LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY, MUNICIPAL AND BUSINESS LEADERS, OUR REGIONAL COUNTY PARTNERS, PENNDOT, AND OUR STATE AND FEDERAL DELEGATIONS IN ORDER TO BUILD ON OUR RICH HISTORY AND TO CONTINUE MOVING FORWARD AS A COUNTY, A REGION, AND OUR COMMONWEALTH TO BE A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, PLAY, AND INVEST!