

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Dirksen Office Building, Room 140
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Dirksen Office Building, Room 188
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Feinstein:

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill, I write to express my strong support to provide \$15 million for the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC), including \$10 million for the State formula funding allocations and no less than \$3 million for competitively awarded grants. I appreciate previous efforts you have made to support NBRC and its continued success as an economic development program strengthening rural communities in Maine and the Northern Border states.

I would recommend that the Committee further direct that competitive grants support projects seeking to help address the decline in forest-based economies in rural communities with the greatest need throughout the four-state region, including for projects associated with economic diversification and the creation of new market opportunities, job creation, job training and other employment services, and infrastructure. In addition, I would ask that the Committee further direct the Federal co-chairman, in consultation with State Governors, to distribute funding to eligible applicants for those projects that will benefit rural communities with the greatest needs

The NBRC is a joint federal-state economic development effort that includes some of the most economically distressed counties of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. For decades, this region has faced tough economic circumstances brought about by a dwindling number of economic and employment opportunities, most recently exacerbated by rapid market changes and a precipitous decline in forest products manufacturing.

Even as available funds for the program have increased, demand in funds requested and total applications has far exceeded the available resources. In FY16, for example, the percentage of awarded funds compared to the amounts requested was only 46 percent. For this same grant cycle, NBRC funds leveraged on average \$5.96 in matching funds for each federal grant dollar that was awarded. Projections show that these efforts will result in thousands of new jobs created and more than a thousand jobs retained, in rural areas with limited employment opportunities.

Since rural economic opportunities cut across state lines, it is important that our region address these obstacles to economic recovery in a meaningful and targeted way. By utilizing local and

regional development plans, NBRC will be able to effectively infuse federal funds into projects with broad economic benefits all across the region.

As Congress continues to work to revive our rural economy, it is imperative that federal resources support successful programs like NBRC to advance economic development and job creation in the most effective way possible. Given the significant return on investment and need for additional resources in the region, it is critical to support the NBRC with the requested increase in funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Angus S. King, Jr.", with a horizontal line underneath it. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Angus S. King, Jr.
UNITED STATES SENATOR