

No. 1987-15

AN ACT

SB 551

Establishing the Rural Economic Development Program for rural Pennsylvania; imposing additional powers and duties on the Department of Commerce, the Department of Education and the State System of Higher Education; making appropriations; and making a repeal.

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The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

CHAPTER 1
GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 101. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Rural Economic Development Program Act.

Section 102. Legislative purpose.

The purpose of this act is to establish a comprehensive rural economic development program for Pennsylvania as defined in this act.

CHAPTER 3
RURAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Section 301. Hardwood utilization.

The Department of Commerce shall, through the Northcentral Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission, enter into a contract with a nonprofit corporation in an effort to promote the following objectives:

- (1) Insure the continued growth of the vital hardwood industry and the renewable hardwood resource.
- (2) Increase the efficiency of the existing hardwood industries within this Commonwealth.
- (3) Expand the hardwood industrial base by encouraging the development of new hardwood industries.
- (4) Enhance the use of hardwood resources through new product development.
- (5) Help create the climate to enhance future private and public investment in the hardwood industry.
- (6) Encourage the hardwood industry to provide jobs which will stimulate the overall economy.
- (7) Insure that effective communication and cooperation exists between the hardwood industry and the Department of Environmental Resources, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, the Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension and interested research and development communities.

Section 302. Brine research and development.

(a) Departmental program.—The Department of Commerce shall provide financial assistance to eligible applicants for qualifying research and development projects to promote the environmentally safe and economically viable management, disposal and reuse of brine and other wastewaters produced in conjunction with oil and gas operations in this Commonwealth.

(b) Project grants.—The financial assistance shall be used for grants by the Advanced Technology Center of Central and Northern Pennsylvania, Inc., to be administered by a project review committee.

(c) Composition of committee.—The project review committee shall be composed of five members, all of whom shall be residents of this Commonwealth. Four members shall be either petroleum engineers, petroleum geologists or experienced drillers' representatives designated by the Pennsylvania Oil and Gas Association and Pennsylvania Natural Gas Associates. One member shall be the Secretary of Environmental Resources or his designated representative.

(d) Committee duties.—The project review committee shall solicit and review applications for assistance and shall recommend for approval the type and level of funding for qualifying projects.

(e) Matching grants.—Nonprofit institutions and organizations and educational institutions shall provide matching funds or support in an amount equal to no less than 15% of the total project cost. Business enterprises and other private persons shall provide matching funds or support in an amount equal to no less than 50% of the total project cost.

(f) Definitions.—As used in this section, the term “research and development project” means an activity entirely or largely conducted in Pennsylvania relating to:

(1) Basic and applied research concerning the management, handling, disposal and reuse of brine and wastewaters produced in association with the production of oil and gas in this Commonwealth.

(2) Demonstration of appropriately scaled, innovative or commercially unproven technology which facilitates the management, handling, disposal and reuse of oil and gas production brines and which is economically viable for the small independent oil and gas producers in this Commonwealth.

(3) Activities which remove obstacles to the management, handling, disposal and reuse of brine and wastewaters produced in association with the production of oil and gas in this Commonwealth.

Section 303. Rural marketing and promotion.

(a) Program.—The Department of Commerce shall establish a program for the development of a rural marketing plan and promotion of industries, available commercial and industrial sites and products indigenous to the area covered by local development districts. The marketing plan shall be developed through cooperative efforts of existing economic development groups within the region served by the local development district and shall include a computerized inventory of available industrial and commercial sites and supporting infrastructure for each site.

(b) Administration.—The Department of Commerce shall administer the program by providing grants to Appalachian Local Development Districts, not to exceed \$100,000 per district, for the development of the marketing plan. Decisions concerning the priority of a grant shall first consider those areas with the highest level of unemployment and the extent of the rural area served.

Section 304. Rural tourism.

(a) Department grants.—The Department of Commerce shall provide grants to Appalachian Local Development Districts, not to exceed \$30,000 per district, for the development of a regional tourism brochure and map designating the historic sites and tourist attractions within the region served by the district. This information shall be developed through cooperative efforts of existing tourism promotion and development agencies within the area served by the district.

(b) Regional tourism programs.—Each local development district shall provide a regional tourism development program which will serve as an integral part of the economic development plan within the local development district.

Section 305. Feasibility studies.

The Department of Commerce shall make grants to the appropriate local development districts to conduct the following:

(1) A feasibility study conducted by the local development district or the county or any designee thereof, to develop a regional tourism development and investment strategy to determine the economic feasibility of a recreational complex within Warren and McKean Counties.

(2) A feasibility study conducted by the local development district or the county or any designee thereof in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Resources, to develop a regional tourism development and investment strategy to determine the economic feasibility of a proposed recreational complex on private lands adjacent to the Cook Forest State Park.

CHAPTER 5 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Section 501. Educational development programs.

The Department of Education shall enter into purchase of service contracts with the following institutions:

(1) The University of Pittsburgh, Titusville Campus, for the implementation of the instructional and student development programs established for, but not limited to, rural students coming from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

(2) The Warren-Forest Higher Education Council for the establishing of rural postsecondary services in Warren and Forest Counties.

(3) The University of Pittsburgh, Bradford Campus, to fund Elk County Higher Education Council.

(4) The Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension for expansion of existing rural leadership training programs.

Section 502. State System of Higher Education.

The State System of Higher Education shall develop a contract with Mansfield University of the State System of Higher Education for the Mansfield University Rural Services Institute to develop an education outreach program providing educational tools geared to rural community needs.

CHAPTER 7 APPROPRIATIONS

Section 701. Appropriation to the Department of Commerce.

The sum of \$1,025,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated to the Department of Commerce for the fiscal year July 1, 1986, to June 30, 1987, to carry out the provisions of Chapter 3. This appropriation shall be allocated as follows:

(1) The sum of \$200,000 is allocated for purposes of the hardwood utilization program.

(2) The sum of \$100,000 is allocated for purposes of the brine research and development program.

(3) The sum of \$500,000 is allocated for purposes of the rural marketing and industrial promotion program.

(4) The sum of \$175,000 is allocated for purposes of the rural tourism program.

(5) The sum of \$25,000 is allocated for purposes of an economic feasibility study of a recreational complex within Warren and McKean Counties.

(6) The sum of \$25,000 is allocated for purposes of the economic feasibility study in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Resources of a proposed recreational complex on private lands adjacent to the Cook Forest State Park.

Section 702. Appropriation to the Department of Education.

The sum of \$250,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated to the Department of Education for the fiscal year July 1, 1986, to June 30, 1987, to carry out the provisions of section 501. This appropriation shall be allocated as follows:

(1) The sum of \$100,000 shall be allocated to the student education development program at Titusville Campus.

(2) The sum of \$100,000 shall be allocated to the rural postsecondary education program in Warren and Forest Counties.

(3) The sum of \$35,000 shall be allocated for the funding of the Elk County Higher Education Council.

(4) The sum of \$15,000 shall be allocated for the expansion of the rural leadership training program.

Section 703. Appropriation to the State System of Higher Education.

The sum of \$100,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated to the State System of Higher Education for the fiscal year July 1, 1986, to June 30, 1987, to carry out the provisions of section 502.

Section 704. Appropriations nonlapsing.

The appropriations made in sections 701, 702 and 703 shall be continuing appropriations and shall not lapse until June 30, 1988.

CHAPTER 9 MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Section 901. Repeal.

The appropriation in the amount of \$2,750,000 to the Department of Commerce for Rural Economic Development in section 208 of the act of July 1, 1986 (P.L. 1776, No. 5A), known as the General Appropriation Act of 1986, is repealed insofar as that appropriation exceeds the sum of \$1,375,000. The sum of money repealed by this section is reappropriated in sections 701, 702 and 703 of this act.

Section 902. Effective date.

This act shall take effect immediately.

APPROVED—The 30th day of June, A. D. 1987.

ROBERT P. CASEY