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## **ESPY SAYS PRESIDENT'S HEALTH PLAN WILL BENEFIT FARMERS AND RURAL FAMILIES**

**WASHINGTON, Sept. 23 -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy said the President's health care plan will have far reaching benefits for farmers and rural families.**

**"The President's health care plan meets the unique needs and circumstances of farmers and rural families," said Espy. "While serving as a congressman for a rural district and now as I travel all across rural America, I know that access to quality health care means more than just health care coverage. It means access to affordable health care providers and facilities and up-to-date information. The President's plan addresses all of these concerns."**

**The plan provides effective strategies for delivering and financing health care in rural areas and increasing the availability of care for families and opportunities for providers. It also allows states flexibility to develop health plans which suit their specific geographic needs - assuring that the needs of rural states won't be forgotten.**

**Under the current health care system, rural communities are suffering. A total of 34 million people -- half of them with incomes under 200 percent of poverty -- live in rural areas with inadequate health care. Seventeen percent of rural Americans have no health insurance, including 25 percent of farm families. To make matters worse, the number of rural physicians is declining making it difficult for rural Americans with insurance to access available services.**

**Some of the important aspects in the health care proposal include:**

**\*Allowing self-employed farmers to deduct 100 percent of their health care costs. Currently, the self-employed can only deduct 25 percent of their health care costs.**

**\*Making coverage more affordable for farmers and other rural Americans through the development of regional alliances, which will allow rural residents to have more bargaining leverage.**

**\*Ensuring universal coverage which will include all part-time and seasonal workers. This will channel significant new resources into rural health care and help to stabilize the financial base for rural health care providers.**

**\*Expanding efforts of the National Health Service Corps which will**

place nearly 3,000 primary care providers in rural areas by the year 2000.

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**\*Expanding the role of nurse practitioners.**

**\*Providing incentives for primary care physicians to serve in rural areas through improved reimbursement payments and bonuses.**

**\*Providing federal funding and technical assistance to develop primary care systems in underserved rural areas.**

**\*Providing funds to link, via telecommunications, rural area providers to health care centers and institutions.**

**"The President's Health Security Act should be particularly welcomed by rural Americans because it addresses some of the long-standing health care problems that have plagued rural communities year after year," said Espy. "With this plan, we will help to ensure that rural families have the care and feeling of security that all Americans deserve."**

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## **USDA, NOAA EXPAND NATION'S EARLY WARNING DISASTER SYSTEM**

**WASHINGTON, Dec. 19 -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy announced today a Clinton Administration initiative to expand the nation's early warning disaster network in rural America.**

**The site for the first new transmitter, made operational today, is in Piedmont, Ala., near where a tornado killed 20 worshippers in a church on Palm Sunday this year.**

**Espy hailed the expanding disaster warning network as a potential lifesaver for rural residents. "Advance notice--even a few moments--is central to taking the right safety actions," Espy said. "Expansion of the network is a vital step which will save lives."**

**During a trip to Piedmont by Espy and Vice President Gore after the Palm Sunday tragedy, the Vice President ordered this expansion of the early warning system.**

**"A tornado's force can't be harnessed, but its death dance can be stopped with proper early warning disaster networks," said Vice President Gore. "We aim to make these early warning networks in rural communities as common as smoke detectors are in homes. We know that every second counts and every transmitter counts as you rush to protect your family from the horrors of a tornado. No family should have to feel the pain and loss that the families in Piedmont have felt since the tragedy there on Palm Sunday."**

**The initiative is a collaborative effort among several Alabama and federal agencies, including USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS), and the National Weather Service, which operates the All Hazard Weather Radio Network. The new transmitter and operations building is at Fort Payne, Ala., on a site known as Pea Ridge where Farmers Telephone Cooperative, which serves the area, has donated space for the transmitter on their relay tower.**

**On Palm Sunday when a tornado demolished the Goshen United Methodist Church, the weather service had issued a warning for the northwest Alabama area but there were no transmitters in the area to alert residents.**

**A few days after the catastrophe, Vice President Gore set in motion a program to expand the disaster radio system to reach 95 percent of the nation's population.**

**The Pea Ridge transmitter and tower is the first of several planned for Alabama by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and its Weather**

**Service agency. Other rural electric and telephone cooperatives will be participating in the warning network, Wally Beyer, RUS administrator said, not only in Alabama but in 11 other states, which have been selected for transmitter sites.**

**There are about 400 transmitters in the nationwide early warning network today, and RUS has targeted 349 new sites. Funding is expected to be provided by public-private partnerships with RUS' borrowers offering to contribute to the effort, such as donating tower space for the transmitters.**

**In Alabama, funding for the project, which is about \$800,000, was provided by the state and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.**

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Release No. 0552.96

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## CLINTON ADMINISTRATION MOVES TO ENSURE RURAL INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY FOR EDUCATION

WASHINGTON, Oct. 10, 1996--In order to help America's schools and libraries gain access to the information superhighway, the Clinton Administration today called for free basic telecommunications connections for every K-12 school and library in the country. This special plan called the E-rate, or education rate, provides a framework for ensuring that access to these services for schools and libraries is affordable and that no area is left out of the information revolution.

President Clinton said, "If we do this, every child in the poorest inner city or most remote rural community will have access to the same knowledge, at the same time, as children in the wealthiest schools. The e-rate will do nothing less than restore the American dream of opportunity for millions of people."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Commerce Department and the Department of Education proposed the plan in a filing to the Federal Communications Commission and the Joint Board of Universal Service.

"Technological literacy is a critical skill for America's students to succeed in the 21st century. Today's work force rewards those workers who possess computer literacy skills. In order to prepare our children to meet the challenges of the 21st century, universal access to the Information Superhighway will be critical," wrote Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, Commerce Secretary Mickey Kantor, and Education Secretary Richard Riley in a letter to Federal Communications Commission Chairman Reed Hundt that accompanied the filing.

Glickman said that especially for rural America such a plan is critical. "For the schools and libraries in rural areas -- and the children and adults who rely on their services -- the E-rate will ensure access to advanced technology and information. Rural Americans will not be left out of the technology revolution that is reshaping our workforce, sweeping our country, and connecting our world."

Earlier this week, Glickman announced \$7.5 million in grants to help rural schools and health care facilities buy end-user equipment to connect hundreds of thousands of rural residents to the information superhighway. The E-rate would ensure that telecommunications transmission charges for schools and libraries in rural areas and throughout the country would be affordable.

The E-rate plan is flexible, market-based, technology neutral, invites competition, protects universal service, and reflects the changing needs of schools and libraries. It is a two-tiered approach that in its first tier proposes a basic package of services be made available to all schools and libraries at no cost to them. Telecommunications service providers would be reimbursed from the already existing universal support system. The basic package includes Internet access, sufficient bandwidth to support educational needs, and brings that connection into the school or library. In the second tier, a bidding process would allow schools and libraries to purchase additional services at deeply discounted rates -- the ceiling for these bids would be the best commercially available rates in that region or state. Inside wiring, or networking, may be included in this tier. The plan also provides additional discounts for low-income and high-cost areas

to have access to these services.

Today's filing was made in response to the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on the matter of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service (CC Docket No. 96-45). Copies of the filing are available via Internet at <http://www.usda.gov/rus/home/home.htm>. or by calling the Rural Utilities Service Office of Public Affairs at (202) 720-1363.

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NOTE: USDA news releases and media advisories are available on the Internet. Access the USDA Home Page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.usda.gov>.

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1995, 1 P.M. EST

Release No. 0213.95

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CLINTON ADMINISTRATION URGES AMERICANS TO GET CONNECTED TO THE INFORMATION AGE

Census Bureau Study Reveals Serious Gap between Information "Haves" and "Have Nots"

WASHINGTON, LOS ANGELES, Calif., March 8, 1995--Secretary of Commerce Ronald H. Brown and Acting Secretary of Agriculture Richard E. Rominger announced today that the Clinton Administration is launching a public education campaign to urge Americans to get connected to the Information Age. The announcement was made at news conferences linked via satellite in Washington, DC and Southern California.

The campaign will demonstrate how access to the National Information Infrastructure (NII), also known as the information superhighway, can help all Americans improve their daily lives.

Secretary Brown released a Census Bureau study that revealed a direct correlation between computer ownership and income level, as well as education level. The data documents that:

- \* White households with incomes above \$75,000 are 3 times more likely to own a computer than White households with incomes between \$25,000 - \$30,000.
- \* African American households with incomes above \$75,000 are 4 times more likely to own a computer than African American households with incomes between \$25,000 - \$30,000.
- \* Hispanic households with incomes above \$75,000 are 5 times more likely to own a computer than Hispanic households with incomes between \$25,000 - \$30,000.
- \* Households headed by persons with at least a college degree are almost 11 times more likely to own a computer than households headed by persons who did not complete high school.
- \* Less than 5 percent of the households headed by persons with less than a high school education have a computer.
- \* The likelihood that a household owns a computer with a modem increases with the education level of the head of the household.

"While I recognize that computer ownership is only one measure and computers are only one of the many technologies involved in the Information Age, I do feel that the results of the study have long-term implications for the economic future of our country and for the quality of life for many of our citizens," said Brown. "As we move toward a knowledge-based economy, more of our jobs are going to require computer literacy and some level of technical expertise."

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Acting Secretary of Agriculture Richard Rominger noted that "the National Information Infrastructure offers tremendous possibilities in rural America. The information superhighway will help rural America survive,

prosper, and compete. It will be as important to the rural renaissance as the farm-to-market roads were in the last century."

Throughout the campaign, the Administration will demonstrate ways that people are using the information superhighway. "Americans must get the message that the NII can bridge economic and geographic barriers and provide access. For example, USDA's Medical Link and Distance Learning Program is connecting people to other people, services and information. We want Americans to start learning how these technologies can benefit them," said Rominger.

"The new telecommunications and information technologies offer tremendous opportunity to prepare Americans for jobs in the Information Age, to strengthen our communities, enhance the education and health care of our citizens, and continue the United States position as a strong world leader. Commerce's Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program is an important vehicle to reach these goals," said Brown.

The Clinton Administration's NII initiative seeks to accelerate the development of our nation's information infrastructure and to ensure access to it by all Americans. Already, the benefits are clear. Students and schools are being connected to some of the best learning institutions in the world through distance learning applications and use of modems to access computer networks. People are receiving medical advice and even being examined long distance by doctors from the best medical centers via video technology. Workers are using computers to access important information for their jobs and well as to telecommute. Citizens are getting connected to networks in order to obtain helpful information from their local, state, and Federal governments, including job listings, housing availability, and grant and loan information.

Larry Irving, Commerce Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information, presided over the Southern California news conference at the Encino-Tarzana Medical Center. He introduced residents from the Los Angeles area, who demonstrated various ways they are using advanced telecommunications technologies to improve their lives.

"Once people realize that this technology has practical, helpful applications, I am confident they will embrace it and get connected," said Irving.

Satellite Coordinate Information: The satellite uplink for the Tarzana Medical Center is SBS-6, Transponder 13(H), downlink frequency 12019.0 Mhz, audio 6.2 & 6.8 Mhz and the uplink for the Department of Agriculture is SBS-6, Transponder 15(H), downlink frequency 12075.0 Mhz, audio 6.2 & 6.8 Mhz (12:45 - 2:30 p.m. EST). B-roll of demonstrations will be available via the Tarzana uplink from 2:00 - 2:15 EST. A special feed will be available from 4:15 - 4:30 p.m. EST: Telstar 302 Transponder (4V), Channel 7; Downlink Frequency 3840 Mhz, audio 6.2 & 6.8. For technical assistance, call 213-819-2468 (L.A.) and 202-720-4001 or 202-720-8559 (USDA).

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Release No. 0341.96

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CLINTON ADMINISTRATION MOVES FORWARD ON INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY  
 Begins Accepting Applications for Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grants

WASHINGTON, June 28, 1996--Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today announced that USDA is now accepting applications for its Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant program funding. This program is a key component of the Clinton Administration's National Information Infrastructure (NII) initiative.

"With Vice President Gore's leadership, the NII initiative connects people to one another, to services and to information," Glickman said. "This initiative is about people gaining the skills for tomorrow, creating new business opportunities, and through technology spanning distance and time to build national and then global communities."

The Distance Learning and Telemedicine program, administered through USDA's Rural Utilities Service, will bring technology to rural schools, hospitals and other medical facilities. The program uses local dollars, leveraged one to one with Federal dollars, to ensure the maximum use of taxpayer dollars.

A total of \$7.5 million is available for eligible applicants, which include rural schools, vocational training and community facilities, libraries, hospitals and Indian tribes.

Approximately 230 rural schools, serving more than 500,000 students, are gaining access to improved educational resources through the information superhighway, as a result of this program, said Under Secretary for Rural Development, Jill Long Thompson.

"They are sharing limited teaching resources and gaining access to libraries, training centers, vocational schools and other institutions located in metropolitan centers," she explained.

In the Telemedicine area, about 112 rural medical facilities, serving more than 134,000 patients can access improved medical care as a result of the program, Thompson said.

The maximum grant to be awarded will be \$350,000 and the minimum \$50,000. The deadline for submitting an application for the program, which was announced in the June 27 Federal Register, is Aug. 5. See attachment for application information.

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NOTE: USDA news releases and media advisories are available on the Internet. Access the USDA Home Page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.usda.gov>

APPLYING FOR A DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE GRANT

Application forms and additional information about the Distance Learning and Telemedicine program are available on the Internet via the RUS home page. The Internet address is: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/dlml.htm>.

Applications will be scored based on the following factors:  
 1. Financial need of the community and the project.

2. Financial composition of the project.
3. Comparative rural character of the project's service area.
4. Documented need for the proposed service.
5. Methods used to connect the project with networks beyond the rural area.
6. Cost effectiveness of the design.

Application information packages may also be obtained from offices of the USDA Rural Development state directors, listed in local telephone books and on the RUS home page, or by faxing Washington area offices of the RUS Telecommunications Program.

When faxing Washington, applicants need to contact the area, or geographical, office serving their state or territory. They are:

-- Northeast: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Wisconsin. Fax: 202-205-2924. Telephone: 202-720-8268.

-- Southeast: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands. Fax: 202-205-2924. Telephone: 202-720-0715.

-- Northwest: Alaska, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Missouri, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington and Wyoming. Fax: 202-205-2921. Telephone: 202-720-0803.

-- Southwest: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Guam, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, North Mariana Islands and Palau. Fax: 202-205-2921. Telephone: 202-720-0800.

Applications must be submitted to the Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, STOP 1590, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., 20250-1590. Applications should be marked "Attention: Assistant Administrator, Telecommunications Program."

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Release No. 0467.95

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## USDA PARTICIPATES IN PRESIDENT CLINTON'S NATIONAL HOME OWNERSHIP STRATEGY

WASHINGTON, June 6, 1995--President Clinton, Vice President Gore, and other administration officials has announced the National Partners for Home Ownership, an initiative that will help families across the country, including those in rural communities, become more independent by owning their homes.

Maureen Kennedy, acting administrator of USDA's Rural Housing and Community Development Service (RHCDS), joined the President, Vice President, and Housing and Urban Development Secretary Cisneros, at a recent White House announcement.

The National Partners for Home Ownership strategy is to carryout public-private partnerships to achieve an all-time high home ownership rate in America by the end of the century. The initiative aims to reinvent government housing programs to promote ownership. More than 50 national organizations have signed partnership agreements committing to work toward the goal and to implement some 100 actions that will generate up to 8 million additional homeowners, many of those in rural America.

"Now, more than ever, we are committed to working with local lenders, builders and communities to offer the dream of home ownership to hardworking rural families, especially those who cannot obtain traditional financing," Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said. "The RHCDS, through its national network of local housing specialists is uniquely prepared to do this."

The importance of home ownership to rural families and their communities was emphasized during a visit to Indian Head, Md., yesterday by Kennedy. Thirty low-income rural families are building their own homes with financing from RHCDS (formerly the Farmers Home Administration), and technical assistance from the Southern Maryland Tri-County Community Action Agency, Inc. At the self-help home building site, Kennedy pledged continued efforts to increase housing opportunities for rural families.

"Home ownership is a key element in strengthening the rural economy," Kennedy said. "In addition to the pride that comes with owning a home, families build equity that they can use later for retirement, for their children's education, or for starting a new business. Housing construction creates needed jobs and increases local tax bases. Families that own their homes are committed to their communities and invested in ensuring their future."

USDA's RHCDS helps rural families obtain housing through several programs, including direct and guaranteed single family home loans, multiple family housing project loans, and farm labor housing loans. Loans and grants to help low-income families repair their homes also are available.

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U.S. RURAL HOMEOWNERSHIP RATE HITS ALL-TIME HIGH Release No. 0247.99

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U.S. RURAL HOMEOWNERSHIP RATE HITS ALL-TIME HIGH

ORLANDO, FLA., June 11, 1999 -- Three out of four rural Americans now own their homes, a record high, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman announced today. Glickman, who made the announcement while helping a group of low-income Floridians build their own houses, said a new government estimate shows that 75.1 percent of all rural households and 66.7 percent of all U.S. households own their homes. Both figures are records.

"This is genuine cause for celebration as we observe National Homeownership Week, June 5-12," Glickman said. "Homeownership is a key to fulfilling the American dream. When people own their homes, they build equity for their future and the future of their children, and become more involved in the affairs of their community."

Glickman presented Terika Baker with the key to her new home, which she has been building for the past six months through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Self-Help Housing Program. Like most program participants, Baker, a single mother, is trying to build a better home in which to raise her five-year-old daughter.

"By substituting sweat equity for cash, these people -- most of whom would never otherwise become homeowners -- are able to build a brighter future for themselves and their children," Glickman said.

Along with a crew of USDA volunteers, Glickman and USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development Jill Long Thompson labored shoulder to shoulder with Baker and members of 15 other rural households participating in the Self-Help Housing Program. Each family has supplied more than 65 percent of the labor to build their homes in the new Tilden Estates development outside Winter Garden, Fla.

"As we strive to fulfill President Clinton's goal of a national homeownership rate of 67.5 percent in the year 2000, we must make certain that low-income rural people are not forgotten," said Long Thompson. "Every year, USDA's Self-Help Housing, Direct and Guaranteed Loan, and other rural housing programs help about 65,000 rural households join the growing ranks of American homeowners."

USDA provides financial backing for self-help housing developments while a local partner agency acquires the land, develops the site, trains participants in building skills and supervises the construction. USDA's partners for the Winter Garden project are Homes in Partnership Inc., a nonprofit central Florida corporation that creates housing for low-income people, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta, and the Orange County Board of Commissioners, which helped finance the project.

USDA's Self-Help Housing Program is active in 43 states and helps 1,500 rural families build homes each year. Participants in a self-help housing development, which typically consists of 12 to 20 households, work as a team, and no one moves into their home until all the houses in the development are completed. For more information on self-help or any other USDA rural housing program, call the USDA Rural Housing Service national office at (202) 720-4323, or visit the website at [www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov).

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Editor's note: A photo of Secretary Glickman at a Self-Help Housing event is available to download at [www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/newsroom/news.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/newsroom/news.htm).

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## **ESPY JOINS CLINTON TO ANNOUNCE EMPOWERMENT ZONES AND ENTERPRISE COMMUNITI**

**(Three of 15 Empowerment Zones and 30 of 95 Enterprise Communities are rural)**

**WASHINGTON, Dec. 21 -- President Clinton, joined by Vice President Gore and Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy today announced the Rural Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community (EZ/EC) designations, which include three rural zones and 30 rural communities across the nation.**

**"These designations will remove government obstacles and help local communities join together in revitalizing their communities," said Espy, who selected the rural Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities. "The President's EZ/EC program works because it puts Americans to work.**

**"And now the EZ/EC concept is a reality because of President Clinton's commitment to revitalize communities and bring jobs to families in areas that have long needed the opportunity to develop and thrive.**

**"As a native of the Mississippi Delta and as Secretary for all of rural America, I remain passionate about finding tangible, real world solutions to rural poverty. This will be one solution."**

**The EZ/EC designations were made to communities across the nation long plagued by poverty--both rural and urban. The designations were based on strategic plans developed after local leaders, organizations, state officials and the private sector pulled together.**

**Each Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community designation will mean special consideration for various federal programs and other assistance, including social service block grants, new tax exempt Facility Bonds, tax incentives for employment, and other special consideration for existing federal programs. Empowerment Zone employers will qualify for tax credits for each qualified worker that resides within the zone and grants will be substantially larger. Each EZ receives \$40 million. Each EC receives \$2.95 million to implement these respective strategic plans.**

**The projects to be implemented are determined by the applicant, not the federal government. Each applicant identified the resources and assistance that was needed to address their specific situation, and proposed how the resources of the private sector, along with the federal, state, local governments, will be used to address the applicant's needs.**

**"I've been within the Washington beltway long enough to know that the real learning goes on outside, in the field," Espy said. "The Empowerment**

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**Zone and Enterprise Community program is evidence of a new way of doing business; of getting government out from behind the desk; and of finally acting like a partner instead of a gate keeper. Our challenge is to follow the lead of these 33 communities, to take their work, their models, and make them available to other communities."**

**USDA Under Secretary for Rural Economic and Community Development Bob Nash developed and implemented the EZ/EC program for Secretary Espy at the Department of Agriculture. "The EZ/EC program has brought people together throughout the country to develop strategies for their communities, Nash said. "In many cases, the community was divided before the EZ/EC program. The program has ended the politics of separation. Whether an area was designated or not today, those communities still have plans they can use to better develop their economies."**

**The EZ/EC law was signed by the President on August 10, 1993. Overall, nine EZ's were designated, of which three are rural and six are urban. In addition, the President announced the 95 EC's, of which 30 are rural and 65 are urban.**

**The application process opened when the program was announced on January 17, 1994, and closed June 30, 1994. Designations were made by Espy and HUD Secretary Cisneros in consultation with the Community Enterprise Board, headed by Vice President Gore. The Board's membership included other Cabinet members as well as advisors to the President on domestic issues.**

**In all, 227 applications for rural designations were received, 88 for designation as Empowerment Zones and 139 for designation as Enterprise Communities. Each applicant for an EZ or an EC, even those that did not get designated today has an opportunity to benefit from the program.**

**Applicants were eligible from the beginning to receive technical assistance in strategic plan development, partnership building, and leadership development. Those not designated today qualify for assistance in seeking regulation waivers for federal programs.**

**The rural Empowerment Zones announced were:**

- 1. Kentucky Highlands (Clinton, Jackson and Wayne counties);**
- 2. Mid-Delta in Mississippi (Bolivar, Sunflower, Leflore, Washington, Humphries, and Holmes counties); and**
- 3. Rio Grande Valley in Texas (Starr, Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy counties).**

**The rural Enterprise Communities named were:**

- 1. Chambers County in Alabama;**
- 2. Greene and Sumter Counties in Alabama;**
- 3. Mississippi County in Arkansas;**
- 4. Imperial County in California;**
- 5. Jackson County in Florida;**
- 6. Macon Ridge in Louisiana (Catahoula, Concordia, Franklin, Morehouse, Tensas**

parishes);

7. Lake County in Michigan;

8. North Delta area in Mississippi (Panola, Quitman and Tallahatchie counties);

9. City of East Prairie and Mississippi County in Missouri;

10. Mora County in New Mexico;

11. Halifax, Edgecombe, and Wilson Counties in North Carolina;

12. Greater Portsmouth in Ohio (Scioto county);

13. City of Lock Haven in Pennsylvania;

14. Beadle and Spink Counties in South Dakota;

15. Fayette and Haywood Counties in Tennessee;

16. Accomack and Northampton Counties in Virginia;

17. Central Appalachia in West Virginia (Roane, Braxton, Clay, Nicholas, Fayette counties);

18. McDowell County in West Virginia.

19. Scott and McCreary Counties in Tennessee;

20. Northeast Louisiana Delta in Louisiana (Madison parish);

21. Robeson County in North Carolina;

22. Yakima County in Washington;

23. Williamsburg and Florence Counties in South Carolina;

24. Josephine County in Oregon;

25. McCurtain and Choctaw Counties in Oklahoma;

26. Crisp and Dooly Counties in Georgia;

27. Central Savannah River Area in Georgia (Burke, Hancock, Jefferson, McDuffie, Taliaferro, Warren counties);

28. City of Watsonville in California;

29. Arizona Border Region of Arizona (Cochise, Yuma and Santa Cruz counties);  
and

30. Eastern Arkansas in Arkansas (Cross, Lee and St. Francis counties).

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## **CLINTON BUDGET PROPOSAL WOULD EXPAND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**WASHINGTON, April 9--Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy said that President Clinton's proposed 1994 budget includes vital components for rural communities across the United States.**

**"Too often in the past, federal assistance for housing, economic development, community facilities and technology has shortchanged rural America," Espy said.**

**The administration's budget proposes more than \$1.9 billion in rural development funding in fiscal 1994 over the 1993 funding level, including:**

**-- An additional \$800 million for financing more than 100,000 housing units.**

**"This level of housing funding represents a 27 percent increase over last year and would be one of USDA's largest increases ever in rural housing," Espy said.**

**-- \$370 million in additional funds for loans and grants to help rural communities build water and waste disposal systems.**

**"Most Americans no doubt take for granted clean water and efficient waste disposal, but that is hardly the case for many rural residents," Espy said.**

**-- An additional \$375 million to expand or build health care facilities and enhance fire and rescue services in rural areas.**

**-- An additional \$200 million in proposed funds for small business development in rural communities. These funds would be administered to fund small business start-ups and expansions in areas of high unemployment.**

**-- An additional \$50 million in proposed funding to modernize rural telephone systems by making them fully compatible with computer information technology.**

**"President Clinton and I want America's rural communities to be in the forefront, not the backwash, of this nation's promising future," Espy said.**

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## USDA TO HELP FAMILIES BECOME HOMEOWNERS

WASHINGTON, May 20--Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy announced today that more than 2,600 homeless or inadequately housed families in nine states have a chance to become homeowners under a U.S. Department of Agriculture plan.

Under the plan, homes held in the inventory of USDA's Farmers Home Administration in the nine states will be offered to public bodies, including housing authorities and nonprofit community-based organizations, or FmHA will rent directly in some case. Those people who rent from FmHA will pay rent based on their income. Families may apply to buy the house at any time during the lease.

"This opens up opportunities for people who need a decent place to live, and it eliminates the cost to the taxpayers of maintaining those empty houses," Espy said. "In addition, I've been a long-time advocate for allowing public housing tenants to buy their residences. Homeownership fosters independence and pride."

FmHA, a credit agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has about 2,600 dwellings in inventory in the nine states. The breakdown is as follows: Alabama, 156; Arkansas, 153; Georgia, 224; Louisiana, 312; Oklahoma, 253; Mississippi, 440; South Carolina, 242; Texas, 626; and Virginia, 143.

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**SECRETARY ESPY TO PARTICIPATE IN GREAT PLAINS SUMMIT ON RURAL HEALTH CARE**

**WASHINGTON, Feb. 16 -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy will join First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to participate in the Great Plains Summit on Rural Health Care at noon on Friday, Feb. 18. The Summit will be held in the Lennox High School gym, 208 West 5th Avenue, Lennox, S.D., and will be hosted by Senator Tom Daschle (D-SD).**

**As Secretary of Agriculture and a former Congressman from a rural Mississippi district, Espy knows firsthand the problems rural Americans face under the current health care system. Those problems include too few medical providers in rural communities and the constant insurance discrimination that confronts farmers and small business owners.**

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**ESPY HOLDS WATER ROUNDTABLE - LAUNCHES "WATER 2000"**

Washington, Aug. 10 -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy today announced the Department of Agriculture would create a strategic national plan to meet the goal of bringing running water to all rural homes by the year 2000.

Espy and USDA Under Secretary Bob Nash held a day-long roundtable today to discuss how to meet the Water 2000 goal.

"In the greatest country on earth, more than one-half million rural American households still lack quality plumbing in their homes," Espy said at the first national roundtable ever held on access to running water. "Such conditions are deplorable. It is this administration's goal to have running water in every rural home by the year 2000."

"President Clinton is dedicated to closing the economic gap between rural America and the rest of the country. The health of rural America--its children and families--depends on meeting this challenge," Espy said. "This administration made a commitment to rural America and this roundtable is the beginning of one more way in which we are going to keep it. In addition, funding for rural water projects has increased from \$1 billion to about \$1.5 billion under the Clinton Administration."

"This roundtable is a first step at bringing together the various interests--federal government, state, local and the private sector to provide solutions to the challenge of putting clean, safe running water in every home in rural America," Nash said.

In addition to representatives from other federal agencies, those participating included: U.S. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Kika de la Garza; U.S. Rep. Tom Barlow of Ky.; the Hearrell family of Sheridan, Ky. who three years ago had their underground water source destroyed by an earthquake; Bobby R. Washington, mayor of Cullen, La., a small community in the process of upgrading its entire water system; and J. Donald Porter, Wall Street banker involved in water finance through a water utility group.

A state breakdown of occupied housing units with incomplete plumbing follows (includes number of counties where more than five percent of the units have incomplete plumbing):

-more-

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**ESPY JOINED CLINTON AT SIGNING OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BANK ACT**

**(ESPY: This legislation will mean new businesses for communities and new jobs for American families.)**

**WASHINGTON, Sept. 23 -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy today joined President Clinton at the signing of the Community Development Bank Act, which will help bring additional investment capital to urban and rural communities across the country.**

**The legislation sets forth a program of federal support for a wide range of specialized lenders known as community development financial institutions (CDFI) that target the development needs of distressed rural and urban communities. This legislation will assist CDFI's in creating jobs in distressed areas through making credit available and by providing necessary technical assistance to start-up efforts, business expansions and employee-owned companies. The program is funded with an authorization of \$382 million over four years. The funding will be managed by an administrator appointed by the President and advised by a 15-member board.**

**"Rural America can bank on the fact that this administration will continue to be innovative in its approach to create jobs across the country," said Espy, who also had championed community development bank legislation as a congressman. "This legislation will mean new businesses for communities and new jobs for American families.**

**"Coming from the Mississippi Delta, I know the importance of providing capital and seed money to people who have the ideas, who have the know-how and who have the sweat to start a business -- but who lack access to flexible start up capital often needed for new business. There are many creative entrepreneurs in our rural communities who are idea rich but resource poor and this legislation can begin to make available the needed capital to forge those ideas into resources."**

**The legislation signed today was announced by the President July 15, 1993.**

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