

Questions for the Record

The Honorable Salvatore J. Panto, Jr.
Mayor, City of Easton, Pennsylvania

On behalf of the National League of Cities

Before the House Energy and Commerce Committee,
Subcommittee on Environment

“Discussion Draft: Brownfields Reauthorization”

April 4, 2017

Question from The Honorable Richard Hudson

In the Eight District of North Carolina, which I am proud to represent, there are many small communities that are not able to support independent brownfields programs. Luckily, we have many regional councils such as the Centralina Council of Governments that apply for community-wide brownfields assessment grants. Do you see benefit in supporting a regional approach to these brownfields cleanup efforts? Would the multipurpose grants help facilitate these regional efforts?

Response from The Honorable Salvatore J. Panto, Jr.

One of the values of regional councils is their ability to provide services and support to smaller communities lacking sufficient resources. In Charlotte and across the nation, councils of government serve their communities through shared services such as brownfields assessments and planning for future economic redevelopment of formerly contaminated sites. NLC and the National Association of Counties support a regional approach to challenges that cross jurisdictional boundaries, and established National Association of Regional Councils to promote those solutions. Several additional examples of regional approaches to brownfields assessment include:

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) in Kansas City, MO has secured and implemented about \$24.2 million of federal and state brownfields funding to leverage approximately \$355.7 million in actual cleanup and new construction since 1997. MARC estimates an average return on investment of about \$15 for every \$1 of public funds in brownfield projects in the Kansas City two-state region.

In the New Orleans, LA region the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission (NORPC) has leveraged over \$77 million in funding to clean up 27 brownfields sites and create 115 permanent jobs, in addition to numerous construction jobs. An additional 375 jobs are expected to be created from projects currently underway. In total, environmental issues at over 58 acres of vacant and abandoned land have been assessed to facilitate their redevelopment with a \$1:\$91 ratio for brownfield investment to redevelopment investment. NORPC focuses on sites that will spur further redevelopment and support local businesses. In addition, many of the sites are owned by nonprofits looking to fill a community need such as senior housing, schools, community meeting/ performance space, and community gardens.

The Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Regional Planning Commission on the Ohio-West Virginia-Pennsylvania border has received almost \$3 million in EPA funding for sites that would otherwise remain vacant without this program. They have leveraged over \$65 million of private investment for these sites that have created 1,074 jobs. In this multi-state area, a community stakeholder group meets regularly as part of a Brownfield Task Force to select sites for performance assessments under their brownfields programs.

The Greater Portland Council of Governments in Maine has identified 400 brownfield sites since 2009 and have leveraged over \$18 million from public and private sources to reclaim polluted properties available for development, however many sites still remain contaminated and unusable. The federal brownfields program helps return polluted properties to community use and Portland, Maine's 400 potential sites would benefit from funding to encourage their productive use and improve public safety.

NLC has partnered with NARC in supporting brownfields reauthorization and support for the Committee action to include multipurpose grants in legislation.