

*Remarks for the
Delta Regional Authority Press Conference
August 20, 2002*

Good afternoon. (recognize Mayor Harris, Rep. Straughter)

The Mississippi Delta region is an area of contrasts. The beauty of its land, music, literature and people stand out against the stark background of poverty and economic instability.

A little over a month ago, we announced the availability of \$4.1 million for public projects through the Delta Regional Authority to help lessen the contrast and improve the potential for the area.

These funds would be available to help build the communities covered by the DRA – communities found in 45 counties around our state.

Applications for funding were accepted through my office, and the response was strong. The task of reviewing the applications was arduous, and each one offered innovative and creative ideas for improving the lives of the people and the community at large.

Funding is available in four areas – public infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, business development, and job training and employment-related education. Each of these areas is a vital part of the growth of the Delta region.

Today, I am submitting a list of 20 projects to Pete Johnson and the Delta Regional Authority. I urge him to approve these projects and the funding for them as soon as possible, so we can begin to strengthen the quality of life in these Delta communities.

The funding for these projects will, I hope, increase in the future. When the concept of the Delta Regional Authority was originally proposed, the funding level was \$35 million.

The Delta needs that money – and I urge the Congress to step up to the plate and provide the necessary funding to help this region achieve its full promise and potential.

There are towns, businesses and public entities represented here today that desperately need help – and that help should come at a level more than \$4 million.

We owe the people and the communities of the Delta more than that – and I’m going to work hard to see they get the help they need.

We can make a difference for the Delta. We can lessen the contrasts that distinguish the region and emphasize instead the success of our work. Our communities, our people, our state deserve no less.

Thank you.