



*NARC policies are developed yearly from consultations with and information provided by the association's working groups, committees and its membership. The policies provide a context for NARC's national agenda on significant national and legislative issues. Each policy brief includes a rationale for NARC's position on topics relevant and important to America's regional councils and metropolitan planning organizations, metro and rural, large and small.*

## Reauthorization of the Appalachian Regional Commission Regional Commissions

**Issue:** Reauthorization for the Appalachian Regional Commission expires in 2006. Preserving funding for the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Delta Regional Authority, the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission and the Denali Commission is important. Authorization of Southeast Crescent Regional Commission and the Southwest Regional Border Authority and legislation that sets national operational standards for any new regional commissions and for the existing Delta Regional Authority and Northern Great Plains Regional Commission should be enacted.

**Background:** The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) was formed in 1965 to address the long-term, chronic economic and social distress and isolation of a particular part of the United States. Its mission over the years has been to retain a strong federal/state/local partnership that is focused on the problems that are endemic to the 13-state Appalachian region. ARC has done this through a bottoms up approach together with flexible programming that has emphasized basic community development, entrepreneurship, education, health care and elimination of the region's isolation through the Appalachian Development Highway System and through efforts to bring telecommunications benefits to communities. The program approach of ARC has allowed many communities to reach the point in recovery where they can actually compete successfully for economic development. Through a very comprehensive approach of assuring funding goes to the areas of highest distress, the ARC has assured a steady transition of a traditionally needy area of the country.

The value of ARC has been its response to a specific region, with particular problems that differ greatly from other parts of the country. Funding from ARC has often been critical to keeping a project in tact. As a result, ARC has been a complimentary funding mechanism to HUD's Community Development Block Grant Program, rural development programs and the Economic Development Administration's programs. ARC neither replaces nor competes with any of these federal grant initiatives. ARC also has become a model for new and proposed regional commissions that focus on endemic problems in identified multi-state regions of the country.

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) was formed to mirror the highly successful ARC. As such, the DRA's mission is to focus on the chronic distress of the Mississippi Delta Region. The region includes eight states and 240 distressed counties or parishes. Despite other efforts, the Delta region remains a critically distressed area that

requires the special attention that can only be provided by a regional commission, working full time to resolve economic and social problems.

The Northern Great Plains Commission (NGPC) was authorized in 2002 after an extensive area service study. The NGPC will focus on areas of particular concern to the mostly farming states that make up the region, including out-migration that has plagued the region for several years.

Two other regional authorities have been proposed – the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, covering the states of Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Florida; and the Southwest Regional Border Authority, covering parts of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California.

**Recommendations:**

The National Association of Regional Councils and its member council of governments, planning commissions and development districts urge Congress to:

- Reauthorize the Appalachian Regional Commission;
- Support the \$88 million funding level, with incremental increases, as authorized for the Appalachian Regional Commission in P. L. 107-149;
- Support legislation authorizing the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission and the Southwest Regional Border Authority;
- Support an adequate funding level for the Delta Regional Authority, the Denali, the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission and any newly formed commissions;
- Retain the strong federal/state/local partnerships as perfected by the Appalachian Regional Commission; and
- Provide flexibility for all commissions to respond to the unique needs of their particular regions.

**NARC Policy:** The National Association of Regional Councils and its members support the reauthorization and continuation of the programs of the Appalachian Regional Commission. The ARC should be funded at the authorized level, and its mission should not be diluted. NARC supports the continuation of and adequate funding for the Delta Regional Authority and the Northern Great Plains Regional Commission; and the formation with adequate funding of the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission and the Southwest Border Regional Commission.

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