

News Release



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Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao Announces \$195 Million for President Bush's Competitiveness Agenda

Upstate New York Selected to Develop Area's Entrepreneurial Community

NEW YORK — U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao today announced a major component of President Bush's Competitiveness Agenda, unveiled last night during the State of the Union Address. Through the **WIRED** (Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development) initiative, the U.S. Department of Labor will invest \$195 million in thirteen regional economies. Upstate New York's Finger Lakes Partnership will receive \$15 million to develop the area's entrepreneurial community.

"We are launching the **WIRED** initiative to encourage regional communities to partner together and leverage their collective public and private sector assets and resources to develop a more highly skilled workforce that can act as the linchpin to attract new economic development and employers," said Chao. "The **Wired** initiative will boost Upstate New York's effort to build a regional workforce and attract industries that can compete successfully in the 21st century worldwide economy."

The goal of the **WIRED** initiative is to transform regional economies by enlisting the skills of the numerous and varied players in those economies to research and produce long-term strategic plans that prepare workers for high-skill, high-wage opportunities in the coming years and into the next decade.

"The only way to address the national challenge of global competition is by building strong regional economies," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training Emily Stover DeRocco. "By bringing together all the key players including research universities, venture capital firms and traditional organizations of economic and workforce development, regions can optimize their ability to innovate."

Each of the following regions will receive \$15 million over a three-year period: Coastal Maine (11 counties, including Augusta and Brunswick); Northeast Pennsylvania (nine counties, including Scranton, Allentown and Reading); Upstate New York (nine counties, including Rochester and Finger Lakes region); Piedmont Triad North Carolina (12 counties, including Greensboro and Winston-Salem); Central Michigan (13 counties, including Lansing, Flint and Saginaw); Western Michigan (seven counties, including Grand Rapids); Florida Panhandle (16 counties, including Tallahassee and Pensacola); Western Alabama & Eastern Mississippi (17 counties in Alabama, including Tuscaloosa and Selma and 19 counties in Mississippi, including Meridian and Starkville); North Central Indiana (14 counties, including Lafayette); Greater Kansas City (10 counties in Missouri and eight counties in Kansas, including Topeka); Denver Metro Region (eight counties, including Denver, Boulder and Ft. Collins); Central & Eastern Montana (32 counties covering mostly rural areas); California Coast (13 counties, including Oakland, Los Angeles and San Diego).

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