

RESOLUTION NO. 25-28

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF CHIPLEY, FLORIDA EXPRESSING ITS SUPPORT THAT THE DESIGNATION OF RURAL AREA OF OPPORTUNITY (RAO), FORMERLY KNOWN AS RURAL AREA OF CRITICAL ECONOMIC CONCERN (RACEC) CONTINUE TO APPLY TO THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA REGION INCORPORATING CALHOUN, FRANKLIN, GADSDEN, GULF, HOLMES, JACKSON, LIBERTY, WAKULLA, WASHINGTON AND WALTON COUNTY NORTH OF THE CHOCTAWHATCHEE BAY AND INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY (INCLUDING THE CITIES, TOWNS, AND COMMUNITIES WITHIN EACH); AND THE CONTINUATION OF ALL STAFFING GRANT FUNDING FOR THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INC. D/B/A OPPORTUNITY FLORIDA, THROUGH FUNDS APPROPRIATED BY THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE AND ADMINISTERED THROUGH FLORIDA COMMERCE, AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE NO LATER THAN JULY 9, 2025.

WHEREAS, in 1999 Governor Bush, by executive order, identified eight counties (Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty and Washington) as Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern, and that this designation was renewed in 2004 and added the area within the city limits of Freeport to this designation.

WHEREAS, in 2000 Opportunity Florida was created to promote and improve economic development in the eight counties designated as Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern; and

WHEREAS, the counties of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Washington and the area within the city limits of Freeport were re-designated in 2010, as a Rural Area of Opportunity for a period of five years; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 11-103 added Wakulla County to the Northwest Florida Rural Area of Opportunity in May 2011; and

WHEREAS, the re-designation expired in 2015 and was renewed for another five years as Executive Order 15-133 and was later amended by Executive Order 17-212 to add the area in Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and the Intracoastal Waterway to the Rural Area of Opportunity; and

WHEREAS, the re-designation expired on July 8, 2020 and was renewed as Executive Order 20-170; and

WHEREAS, the various counties and municipalities in the Opportunity Florida region request that Governor Ron DeSantis renew the designation as a Rural Area of Opportunity; and

WHEREAS, the Northwest Florida Business Development Council, Inc., dba Opportunity Florida, in cooperation with and through the support of the ten counties, all municipalities within the ten counties, the City of Freeport, all CareerSource Centers serving the region and corporate sector partners, has made great strides in improving the economic outlook for the region by

assisting with recruiting new industries, supporting infrastructure projects and working together with local communities and other organizations such as Florida Commerce, FDOT and the Governor's Office; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the progress that has been made since 2005, through the Great Recession, category five Hurricane Michael, and Covid-19, there is still much work that needs to be done to help these ten counties compete economically with other parts of Florida and neighboring states; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF CHIPLEY, FLORIDA, THAT: does hereby express its support of the following:

1. That the designation of "Rural Area of Opportunity," continue to apply to Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, and Washington counties and the city of Freeport, and the area in Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and Intracoastal Waterway; and
2. That Opportunity Florida continue to be recognized as the designated rural regional economic development organization for this Rural Area of Opportunity.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Chipley, Florida, this 13th day of May 2025.

CITY OF CHIPLEY

Tracy L. Andrews, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sherry Snell, City Clerk