

RESOLUTION NUMBER 2023-11

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LEVY COUNTY, FLORIDA, REQUESTING AND EXPRESSING ITS SUPPORT THAT THE DESIGNATION OF RURAL AREA OF OPPORTUNITY (RAO) CONTINUE TO APPLY TO THE NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA REGION INCORPORATING BAKER, BRADFORD, COLUMBIA, DIXIE, GILCHRIST, HAMILTON, JEFFERSON, LAFAYETTE, LEVY, MADISON, PUTNAM, SUWANNEE, TAYLOR, AND UNION COUNTIES (INCLUDING THE CITIES, TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES WITHIN EACH); REQUESTING AND EXPRESSING ITS SUPPORT FOR THE CONTINUATION OF ALL REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT FUNDING FOR THE NORTH FLORIDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP (NFEDP) THROUGH FUNDS APPROPRIATED BY THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE AND ADMINISTERED THROUGH THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, in 2003 Governor Jeb Bush, by executive order, identified fourteen counties (Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor, and Union) as one of the three Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO), and that this designation was renewed in 2008, again in 2013, and again in 2018;

WHEREAS, the North Florida Economic Development Partnership (NFEDP) was created as the regional organization to work in cooperation with the 14 counties to promote and improve economic development throughout the North Central Florida region;

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

WHEREAS, the NFEDP, in cooperation with and through the support of the 14 counties, all municipalities with the 14 counties, all Local Workforce Development Boards serving the region, and corporate sector partners, has made great strides in improving the economic outlook for the North Central Florida RAO by assisting with recruiting new industries, supporting infrastructure projects and working together with local communities and other organizations such as Enterprise Florida, DEO, DEP, FDOT, and the Governor's Office; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the progress that has been made since 2018, there is still much work that needs to be done to help these fourteen counties and the region strategically plan and actually compete for economic development projects, and to retain and expand existing businesses to generate jobs and wealth in the region.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of County Commissioners of Levy County, Florida (the "Board"), that:

1. The designation of the North Central Florida Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO) continue to apply to Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor, and Union counties.
2. All Regional Rural Development Grant funding be continued and expanded for the North Central Florida Economic Development Partnership (NFEDP) through funds appropriated by the Florida Legislature and administered through the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Enterprise Florida, Inc., and/or other designated agencies.
3. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

Duly Adopted this 21st day of February, 2023.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LEVY COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST: Clerk of the Circuit Court
and Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Danny J. Shipp

Matt Brooks, Chairman

Approved as to form and legal sufficiency

Nicolle M. Shalley, County Attorney