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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 14, 2018

FAYETTE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS STRENGTHEN D.C. BONDS

Uniontown, PA – In a bipartisan effort, Fayette County commissioners Vincent Vicites (D) and Dave Lohr traveled to Washington, D.C., last week, seeking federal funds for county projects.

“It is vitally important that all levels of government work together to serve the citizens of Fayette County, regardless of political party,” Vicites said.

The pair spent a day meeting with Congressman Bill Shuster, U.S. Senator Bob Casey and representatives from U.S. Senator Pat Toomey’s office at the U.S. Capitol, discussing Fayette County’s priorities for 2018, which include:

- Development of a new business park through the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority, to be centrally located in Uniontown and create space to host over 45 commercial, retail and professional spaces, similar to an existing, successful, job-creating project in South Union Township.
- Upgrades to voting systems throughout the county, modernizing security and replacing aging equipment to maintain a fair and accessible voting system for all.
- Acquiring the U.S. Army Reserve Center on McClellandtown Road in Uniontown through the Federal Surplus Property Public Conveyance Program under the U.S. General Services Administration, for prison-related purposes.
- Extension of the main runway at Joseph A. Hardy Connellsville Airport through the Fayette County Airport Authority, to continue improving the airport as a vital regional asset to the county’s modal transportation system and better serve community needs.
- Completion of the 34-mile Sheepskin Trail, which runs through the heart of Fayette County and is the missing link to a nationally-significant trail system.
- Countywide expansion of rural broadband, creating more opportunities for technological advancements in daily life and a networked society with increased connectivity between communities, economic growth and innovation.

Vicites said the meetings were “very productive” and will help Fayette County when applying for various federal funding opportunities.



"Our three federal legislators will understand our priorities and, in the process, we have secured their commitment to push for these requests to come to Fayette County," Vicites said.

Lohr said furthering the county's already-strong connections with Shuster, Casey and Toomey, was the most rewarding part of the experience.

"It benefits Fayette County when our federal lawmakers know who we are and what our vision for the county is, so that when we need their assistance, they know what our priorities are and where we're coming from," Lohr said.

The D.C. networking allowed commissioners to make new contacts and bring back materials to help a number of county agencies and departments, Vicites added.

Lohr said some of the biggest takeaways for the county are working with the federal government to revitalize county areas through an Opportunity Zones program, and building county infrastructure through increased transportation and broadband.

"(Federal legislators') support makes a difference on several levels - not the least of which is helping to build bridges between local and regional concerns, finding and securing funding for our projects and assisting when roadblocks to progress arise," Lohr said.

Prior to their meetings with federal legislators, Vicites and Lohr attended the National Association of Counties (NACo) Legislative Conference at the Washington Hilton Hotel in D.C.

Although Fayette County Commissioner Angela Zimmerlink joined her colleagues at NACo and in legislative meetings in 2017, she was unable to participate this year.

"Networking with county officials from all over the United States to discuss county government can help improve the efficiency of services we provide to the citizens of Fayette County," Vicites said.

Vicites said the four-day conference, attended by 2000 counties, gave them "a lot of national perspective on what we're trying to accomplish," through discussions of such topics as the opioid epidemic and poverty in America.

"It was really informative and shows us that everyone is facing similar problems," Vicites said. "I like to make the most out of everything and find out how other county governments are dealing with similar issues."

Meeting with other county commissioners and exchanging ideas "is all for the betterment of the county," Lohr added.



"The Fayette County Commissioners are not a standalone entity," Lohr said. "Our D.C. legislators have access to different resources than our state legislators, which is why elected officials at every level need to work together. Together we can accomplish so much more!"

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.info.

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This communication, among other initiatives, is funded through the 2016 Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.