



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

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news

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GOVERNOR BLAGOJEVICH NAMES *OPPORTUNITY RETURNS* REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR EAST CENTRAL REGION

Vermilion County Board Chairman Todd Lee to Lead Unprecedented Economic Development Plan for Six-County Area

SPRINGFIELD - Governor Rod Blagojevich today named Vermilion County Board Chairman Todd Lee as the regional director of the East Central region for *Opportunity Returns*, the Governor's comprehensive economic development plan to spur growth and create jobs. Lee will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the *Opportunity Returns* plan for the East Central region, which encompasses the counties of Champaign, Douglas, Ford, Iroquois, Piatt and Vermilion.

“Todd Lee’s professional background mirrors the economy of the East Central region – tremendously diverse. His success in a variety of retail businesses, along with the strong leadership he has exhibited as the Chairman of the Vermilion County Board, provide a wealth of valuable experience he can draw upon each day to drive economic development throughout the region. Moreover, Todd has a network of business and government contacts already established in the region that will allow him to execute the objectives of this plan efficiently and effectively. I have no doubt he’ll hit the ground running,” Governor Blagojevich said.

The Governor’s innovative program for the East Central region will be the next *Opportunity Returns* plan unveiled and will target key areas such as business retention, education and job training, agriculture and improving public infrastructure.

“The Governor has made an excellent selection with Todd Lee. He is intimately familiar with this region and the kind of support we need to reach our vast economic potential. I look forward to working with him because his dedication to helping all of us create more jobs today and tomorrow will be beneficial to the East Central region and the entire state,” said State Senator Richard Winkel (R) of Urbana.

“Todd Lee is exactly the kind of person we need because there is nothing more important than helping our economy get back on the right track. His extensive experience in economic development and his intricate knowledge of the East Central region will all translate into him doing a fantastic job. I know creating more opportunities for people throughout our region to earn a good living is Governor Blagojevich’s top priority and putting Todd in this position is yet another illustration of this commitment,” State Rep. Bill Black (R) of Danville said

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Lee has roots that run deep in the East Central region. Prior to his twelve-year tenure on the Vermilion County Board, where he has served as Chairman since 2000, Lee was an Oakwood Village Trustee from 1986 to 1990. His leadership experience also includes serving as the Chief Elected Official of the Workforce Investment Board in the East Central region, as well as President of the Illinois County Board Members and Commissioners, Zone III.

"East Central businesses need effective leadership that they can rely on to provide real solutions in this challenging economy. Todd has management experience that spans from a large, internationally owned corporation to a small, locally owned company. He also has been the executive responsible for running a government operation of more than 700 employees. Put together, his business, government and geographical knowledge of the East Central region will complement the resources the Governor will commit here and set the region on course to a brighter economic future," Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin said.

"I'd like to thank the Governor for this wonderful opportunity. With my background in business and local government, I feel I have a well-rounded appreciation for the needs of the East Central region. Creating and retaining jobs in this region is the most challenging task we are faced with. The Governor's *Opportunity Returns* plan will have a strategic approach to meeting that challenge, including targeted investments to retain our manufacturing base. I'm looking forward to joining the fight to turn these ideas into many more jobs throughout the region," Lee said.

The *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois' history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn't work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business. Each plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from. The Governor has already unveiled plans for six of the ten regions – the Northern Stateline, Northwest, Southern, North Central, Southwest and West Central regions. He will be announcing the plans for the East Central, Southeast, Central and Northeast regions in the coming months.

Interview will be available at www.state.il.us/iisradio/ori.htm

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