



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

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GOVERNOR BLAGOJEVICH NAMES *OPPORTUNITY RETURNS* REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR WEST CENTRAL ILLINOIS

Governor Selects Former Macomb Mayor Thomas Carper to Lead Unprecedented Economic Stimulus Plan in Nine-County Area

Macomb-Governor Blagojevich today named Thomas Carper as the regional director for the West Central region for *Opportunity Returns*, his historic, regional economic development plan. Carper, who recently concluded a twelve-year term as mayor of Macomb, will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Governor's new economic initiative designed to spur economic growth in the nine-county beltway along the Mississippi River between the Quad Cities and St. Louis.

The Governor's innovative plan for the West Central region will be rolled out early next year and will target resources to key areas such as business retention, agriculture, education and job training, regional tourism, and improving public infrastructure.

Governor Blagojevich said that the region will benefit from Carper's extensive experience as a local government leader and his accomplished record of servicing his constituents. "At its most basic level, this initiative is about creating more opportunities for the people of this region to earn a decent living. Throughout his long tenure in public office, Tom Carper has worked tirelessly to create a better way of life for people throughout West Central Illinois," Governor Blagojevich said. "As mayor of Macomb, he successfully fought to provide and preserve vital services for his community, such as affordable housing and passenger rail service. I know he'll bring that same tenacity to creating more jobs throughout the West Central region."

Among his accomplishments as Mayor, Carper led the fight to preserve passenger rail service to the region, implemented a rental housing inspection and registration program to ensure safe and affordable housing in Macomb, created a more stable and abundant water supply for the city by securing funding and financing for a reverse osmosis treatment system presently under construction, and enacted an extensive bidding of city contracts and services saving the taxpayers of Macomb over \$1 million.

"Tom is well versed in working with business and community leaders and elected officials on both sides of the aisle. As a former mayor and a longtime advocate for West Central Illinois, he is deeply familiar with the economic development issues confronting the region. He is the best man for the job," State Senator John Sullivan said.

(more)

"Tom Carper has been a great leader for the region. I'm thrilled that the Governor chose someone of his stature for this position. He has a proven track record and hands on experience in employment issues in each and every county," Quincy Mayor Charles Scholz said.

"Tom Carper has been a successful small businessman, as well as a dynamic and innovative elected official with a keen understanding for turning strategic investments into effective economic answers to pressing problems. He understands the needs and priorities of these communities and will work hand-in-hand with people throughout the region ensuring that West Central Illinois reaches its economic potential," Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin said.

Governor Blagojevich's *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 throughout each region, with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. These economic initiatives are designed to be flexible and effective. Each plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

"I'm excited and enthused about the opportunity to continue working to improve economic opportunities in the West Central region. Governor Blagojevich has created a bold and innovative plan to bring a more personal touch to economic development," Carper said. "I appreciate the Governor's confidence in my ability to serve the citizens of Western Illinois. We know his goal is creating more jobs, and we plan on delivering."

The West Central region comprises Adams, Brown, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, and Warren counties.

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