

## ABOUT MRPC

MRPC is a voluntary council of local governments serving the Meramec area of Missouri since 1969. The area includes the eight counties of Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski and Washington and their respective cities.

The mission of MRPC is to enhance the quality of life for residents of the Meramec Region. In pursuit of this mission, MRPC will bring about results in these areas:

- Cleaner, healthier and safer communities,
- Greater socio-economic and cultural wealth through community and economic development, and
- A stronger, unified voice in the legislative process.

Meramec Regional Planning Commission  
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This report was distributed by MRPC to the Meramec Region's federal delegation in March 2025.

## Members of the Meramec Region's Congressional Delegation:

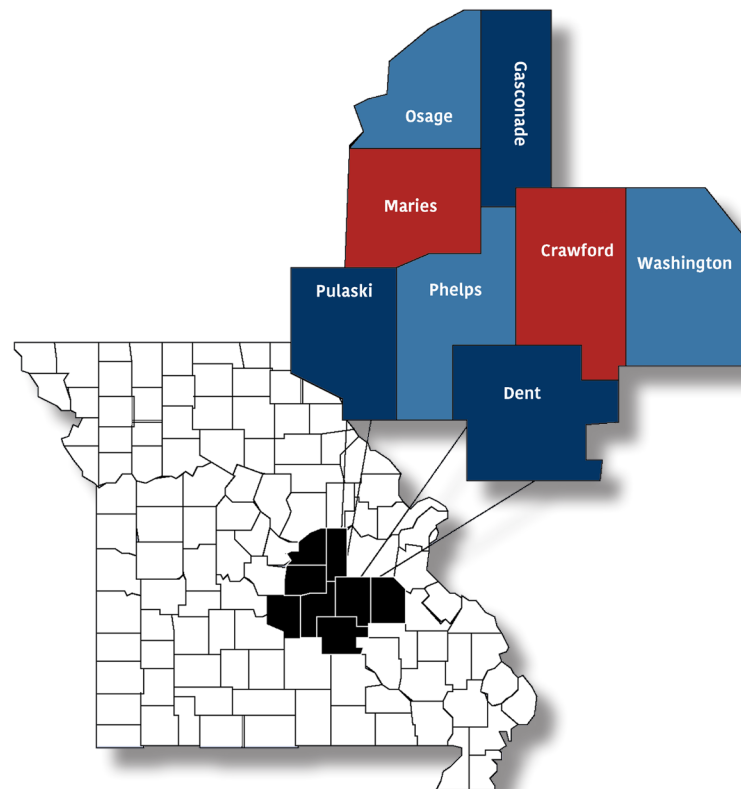
The Honorable Sens. Josh Hawley and Eric Schmitt  
Reps. Jason Smith, Mark Alford and Bob Onder

The Meramec Regional Planning Commission, representing eight counties and their respective cities, is pleased to present its 2025 Federal Priorities agenda to you. In addition to our specific priorities, we encourage efforts that create jobs and offer grant funding to address critical needs for rural areas, like ours. We look forward to working with you, and we thank you in advance for your consideration of our 2025 Federal Priorities.

Sincerely,

Mary Heywood  
MRPC Chairman

Bonnie J. Prigge  
Executive Director



## Federal Priorities in the Missouri Meramec Region

2025 Congressional Issues

Prepared by: Meramec Regional Planning Commission  
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**The Meramec Regional Planning Commission Board hereby shares its identified, prioritized and approved 2025 Federal Legislative Issues. While the categories are in no particular order, the priorities beneath each category head are listed in priority order.**

### **ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:**

- Reduce percent of match requirements for small communities for grants.
- Continue to provide equitable solutions and increased funding for deteriorating critical infrastructure in rural and impoverished communities to assure access to clean water and sanitary sewers; adequate roads and bridges; walkable sidewalks; and accessible recreational facilities.
- Support digital infrastructure and connectivity through the expansion of broadband access. Advocate for expanded federal funding for rural broadband to ensure all communities have access to high-speed internet.
- Continue to support and promote Fort Leonard Wood using the results of the FLW Joint Land Use Study and Missouri's Military Infrastructure Report. Fort Leonard Wood is an economic engine that puts over \$2 billion annually into the Missouri economy.

### **TRANSPORTATION:**

- Increase funding for interstate road repairs and U.S. highways as well as bridges. Allocate more resources to public transportation, especially in rural areas. Provide additional federal funding for improvements to U.S. Highway 63 and 50 corridors.
- Provide additional funding for air and rail expansion and services as well as multi-modal hubs to facilitate the delivery of goods and services. Increase, improve and expand ports to eliminate transportation bottlenecks and increase supply routes.
- Construct the necessary four-lane bridges now, rather than later, to accommodate the increase in large truck traffic for projects that will eventually become four-lane highways, such as U.S. Highways 63 and 50.

### **ENVIRONMENT:**

- Sell no land to adversarial foreign interests, especially near military bases.
- Strike a balance between climate change initiatives, renewable and clean energy opportunities as opposed to fossil fuels by more fully realizing their effects on rural economies and lower income communities. Allow for oil drilling in areas now prohibited with heavy fine incentives for abusers of the environment.
- Continue to support and protect our national parks, monuments, wildlife reserves and public lands for future generations enjoyment and economic benefit.
- Provide tax reduction incentives for food-service companies and farms to donate surplus food to food banks and other charitable food donation programs in an effort to reduce food waste.

### **HOMELAND SECURITY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:**

- Improve/address border security. Implement jail time for criminals on the terrorist want list. Implement major jail time for drug smugglers. The U.S. should consider a better way to assist, and make it easier, for those who want to enter the country through the legal process and become productive citizens.
- Build upon the experience, capacity and skills of regional planning commissions to coordinate, plan and implement homeland security and emergency preparedness activities on a regional basis and allow local decision-making.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES:**

- Reduce match on federal grants. Small communities cannot provide 40-50 percent match on large projects.
- Preserve the current tax exemption for municipal bonds. Tax-exempt financing, used by both state and local governments to raise funds to finance public capital improvements is critical to sustain economic growth.

### **HEALTH CARE & SOCIAL SERVICES:**

- Address critical healthcare workforce shortages in rural areas by establishing talent pipelines and training efforts, such as the Work Opportunities for Rural Communities (WORC) Grant in Washington County, funded by the Delta Regional Authority and the Department of Labor and coordinated through Meramec Regional Planning Commission, Washington County Ambulance District, Great Mines Health Center, and others. Continue to adequately fund and expand the State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP), the National Health Service Corps through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), which provides loan forgiveness to those who agree to practice in rural areas and the J-1 Visa Program to address the critical shortage of doctors, dentists, nurses, and psychiatrists in rural areas. Promote workforce development to specifically address rural physician recruitment and retention, workplace violence and oppose minimum staffing rations.
- No healthcare to non-citizens.
- Increase support for small hospitals and clinics in small communities. Assure adequate funding for Critical Access Rural Hospitals and more fully understand their importance to not only regional health needs but also local economic factors.
- Increase funding for the HUD Housing Choice Voucher program and ensure that HUD pays full administrative funding to housing agencies and authorities.

### **EDUCATION:**

- Address critical teacher shortages, especially in rural areas; pay must be increased and/or incentives provided. This includes providing equitable funding for rural school districts, especially those in impoverished areas.
- Expand vocational education opportunities and training through federal incentives. Increase funding for workforce training to address critical shortages in key areas such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, technology and skilled trades, including carpenters, plumbers, electricians, HVAC workers, mechanics, etc.

### **ENERGY:**

- Continue to explore opportunities to decrease our dependence on foreign fuel consumption by incentivizing environmentally conscious American resources and focus on U.S. being energy independent by accessing our own oil production.
- Support the development of legislation that streamlines permitting, promotes cost effective regulatory policies and encourages utilizing the Nuclear Engineering programs in the University of Missouri system and other opportunities to develop recommendations for locating new generating facilities and forward-looking improvements to the grid.

### **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Encourage production in the U.S. and not overseas for items, especially computer chips, to become less dependent on foreign sources. Provide incentives to bring manufacturing back to the U.S.
- Streamline the postal service to make it more efficient, such as separating local and out of town mail, so that local does not have to go to a regional center and then be sent back.
- Ensure election security and stop mail-in ballots.



**A Voluntary Council of Local Governments Since 1969**