



Congressman

G. K. Butterfield

Representing the People of North Carolina's First District

on the web at www.house.gov/butterfield



Medicare

As the sign-ups for the Medicare Part D prescription-drug program continue, many seniors have become frustrated and confused by the perplexing process. Since the program began on January 1, 2006, many needy beneficiaries have been charged excessive fees or denied coverage altogether. Others who enrolled in plans based on formulary information from Medicare's website or pamphlets have discovered the plans do not cover their medicines. Beneficiaries in North Carolina must weigh 48 different plans to decide what best suits their needs.

The transition has failed to be seamless and the federal government needs to provide beneficiaries extra protections and time during the first year of this complex new program so that they won't feel pressured into making a bad choice. Toward that end I am supporting the Medicare Informed Choice Act, a bi-partisan bill which already has the support of 131 House members and 20 Senators.

As the law currently stands, seniors and people with disabilities will face stiff financial late enrollment penalties if they fail to enroll in a Medicare drug plan by May 15, 2006. Additionally, if they enroll in a plan, most will not be permitted to switch plans until 2007 – even if they discover they've made the wrong choice. Furthermore, some retirees who purchase drug coverage through Medicare may unknowingly lose their retiree health benefits from their previous employer.

The Medicare Informed Choice Act would provide three simple and needed changes: a six-month delay of the late enrollment fee, a one-time opportunity for every beneficiary to switch plans and protection against the loss of retiree health benefits.

Seniors seeking further information about Medicare Part D prescription-drug programs can call the help line at 1-800-MEDICARE or visit the web site at www.medicare.gov.



Service Academy Nominations

Each year, I receive applications from area high school students who

and be nominated from an authorized person including a Member of the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives. All of the U.S. Service Academies, except for the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, require a nomination for admission.

Last year, three students from the District earned appointments to the service academies as part of the Class of 2009: Dominic A. Senteno of Chocowinity, U.S. Military Academy (West Point); Dennis M. Cross of Littleton, Air Force Academy; and, Michael M. Eason of Roanoke Rapids, Naval Academy.

The full process, requirements and application can be found on the web at www.house.gov/butterfield/services/



Home Heating Costs

It will come as no surprise to anyone living in eastern North Carolina that the costs of heating your home will soar this winter. An eight-page analysis of the First District of North Carolina by the House Committee on Government Reform's Minority Staff found that this winter's increased heating expenses

will cost people in eastern North Carolina tens of millions of dollars, and that 71,000 families eligible for assistance are unlikely to receive help.

The report found that the increased prices were likely to cost 125,000 local families an additional \$62 million more this winter than it



Michael M. Eason of Roanoke Rapids, one of last year's military academy nominees, now attends the Naval Academy.

are eager to continue their education at a service academy. To be considered for an appointment to a service academy - U.S. Air Force Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy, the U.S. Military Academy (West Point), and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy - an applicant must meet the eligibility requirements established by law



Congressman Butterfield speaks to a group of students on the steps of the Capitol to discuss educational issues.

did four years ago – and the costs are even greater in the event of a cold winter.

Last year, there were 840,000 low-income families in North Carolina eligible to receive financial assistance with home heating costs through the federal Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), but only 225,000 of those families received assistance because of funding shortfalls. For this year, the study found that of the 97,000 families eligible for LIHEAP in the First District, only 26,000 families will receive assistance. That leaves 71,000 families without help.

I will continue to press for the funds needed to help our families in eastern North Carolina keep warm this winter.

The full report is available through Butterfield’s Congressional web site at: www.house.gov/butterfield.



Legislative Priorities

Our nation is faced with numerous challenges both overseas and at home. In the coming legislative year, it is my hope that Congress will focus its time and energy on issues affecting our seniors, veterans, farmers and families such as:

Jobs and the Economy - The cumulative effects of continued U.S. budget deficits, unstable energy prices, the growing U.S. trade deficit, trade policy inflation, outsourcing, a changing economy and a sustained recession have all contributed to tremendous job losses. My colleagues and I must work to reverse this trend, and I will continue working to bring the federal resource needed to help our communities attract and grow businesses.

Agriculture – Farmers and their families are facing tough times. A poor economy, droughts and heat waves have all added to the difficulties over the past few years. My office has engaged in efforts to ensure that the current Farm Bill is extended and to resist any attempts to reduce assistance to farmers. Farm Bill programs account for less than 1% of the federal budget, but agriculture is responsible for 15% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Cutting agriculture programs will create more problems than it solves.

Healthcare – Access to quality affordable healthcare is critical to the well-being of every American. It is simply unacceptable that there are over 43 million Americans living without health insurance, and that working families cannot afford the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs. I have joined many of my colleagues in urging leadership to revisit the changes to Medicare, and

repeal and replace parts of the bill to ensure that all seniors are provided an affordable, guaranteed drug benefit. Congress should also fight cuts to Medicaid and increase funding for rural health programs and rural health centers.

Veterans – Recognizing veterans’ great sacrifices to our country, I am pushing for Congress to enact the “Salute to Veterans and the Armed Forces” legislation. I strongly support this comprehensive package to improve veterans’ benefits that would reduce wait times for health-care, improve survivor benefits, speed up the processing of VA disability claims and block any attempt to double VA drug co-payments and increase enrollment fees.



Constituent Services

One of my most important tasks as your U.S. Representative is to assist you with federal problems. Although I cannot override the decisions made by a federal agency, I can often intervene on your behalf to ask questions, find solutions or simply cut through the red tape.

My office can help to make sure that veterans receive the health care, disability compensation and other benefits they have earned. I also have staff who can help you navigate the process of finding available federal grant funding.

U.S. Flags are available for purchase through my Washington, D.C. office. At your request and with sufficient notice, the flag can be flown over the U.S. Capitol building in honor of a person or event. Also, if you have a worn or faded flag, you can drop it off at one of the regional office and I will make sure that the flag is given to a veterans' organization so that it can be properly destroyed in accordance with the Flag Code.



Unclaimed Tax Refunds

Over 2,500 North Carolina taxpayers have unclaimed refunds totaling nearly \$2 million waiting for them.

To find out whether you have an unclaimed refund, visit the IRS' web site at www.irs.gov and click on the "Where's My Refund?" section. To utilize this website, enter your Social Security number, filing status (such as single or married filing jointly) and the refund amount shown on your 2004 tax return. When the information is submitted, "Where's My Refund?" will show the status of a refund and, in some cases, provide instructions to resolve potential account issues.

If you do not have access to the Internet and think you may be missing a refund, check your records first or contact your tax preparer, then call the IRS' toll-free assistance line at 1-800-829-1040.



Free Assistance with Tax Returns

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA)

The VITA Program offers free tax assistance to low- to moderate-income residents earning less than \$37,000. Volunteers sponsored by various organizations receive training to help prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country. VITA sites are generally located at community and neighborhood centers, libraries, schools, shopping malls, and other convenient locations. Most locations also offer free electronic filing. To find the nearest VITA site, call 1-800-829-1040.



Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE)

The Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program provides free tax help to people age 60 and older. Trained volunteers from non-profit organizations provide free tax counseling and basic income tax return preparation for senior citizens. Volunteers who provide tax counseling are often retired individuals associated with non-profit organizations that receive grants from the IRS.

As part of the IRS-sponsored TCE Program, AARP offers the Tax-Aide counseling program at more than 9,000 sites nationwide during the filing season. Trained and certified AARP Tax-Aide volunteer counselors help people of low-to-middle income with special attention to those age 60 and older.

For more information on TCE call 1-800-829-1040. To locate the nearest AARP Tax-Aide site, call 1-888-227-7669 or visit www.aarp.org/money/taxaide/



Military Personnel and Their Families Get Free Tax Help

Marines, airmen, soldiers, sailors, and guardsmen, and their families worldwide get tax preparation help at offices within their installations. These VITA sites provide free tax advice and preparation, and assistance to service men and women and their families. They are trained and equipped to address military specific tax issues, such as combat zone tax benefits and the effect of

the new Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) guidelines. The military tax programs generated over 392,000 electronic federal income tax returns in 2003.

Most service members file their tax returns electronically at their tax centers and, by selecting direct deposit, receive their refunds in as little as one week. This combined effort ensures that service members receive free tax assistance from well-trained and equipped military tax preparers.

Items you need to bring to the VITA/TCE Sites

- Photo identification
- Social Security Cards for you, your spouse and dependents
- Birth Dates for primary, secondary and dependents on the tax return
- Current year's tax package if you received one
- Wage and earning statement(s) Form W-2, W-2G, 1099-R, from all employers
- Interest and dividend statements from banks (Forms 1099)
- A copy of last year's Federal and State returns if available
- Bank Routing Numbers and Account Numbers for Direct Deposit
- Other relevant information about income and expenses
- Total Paid for Day Care
- Day Care Providers' Identifying number
- To file taxes electronically on a married filing joint tax return, both spouses must be present to sign the required forms.



Internship Opportunities

My office is pleased to offer internships to students who wish to learn more about Congress and the legislative process. By allowing students a unique perspective on the inner workings of our country's representative government, Congressional internships offer an exciting educational experience.

Internships are unpaid positions. During the summer months, internships generally last for four weeks. During the academic year (September to May), internships generally cover the student's semester, from September to December in the Fall or January to May in the Spring. Both part-time and full-time internships are available.

Interns in our office must be highly motivated, have strong communication skills, both written and verbal, and a keen interest in the legislative process. Duties include attending legislative hearings and community meetings, participating in regular office meetings, conducting legislative research, giving tours of the Capitol Building to visiting District residents, and responding to constituent inquiries and phone calls.

If you are interested in applying for an internship in either my Washington DC or North Carolina offices, please contact my intern coordinator at 202-225-3101.



Congressional Arts Competition

This spring, Merrit Chesson, an 11th grader at John A. Holmes High School in Edenton, N.C., won the annual Congressional Arts Competition held at the Leo Jenkins Fine Arts Center at East Carolina University.

Each year, Members of Congress are provided the opportunity to submit one piece of student artwork which is prominently displayed in the Cannon Tunnel, located between the Cannon House Office Building and the United States Capitol

Building. The art is enjoyed by the extensive pedestrian traffic.

It's a great opportunity for many of our region's young artists and their families to come together and share their work with one another. I was impressed with the talents of our region's young people, and it left me only further convinced of the need for federal support for the arts so that we can fully develop the creativity and talent of our youth. I encourage all high school art students to actively participate in the competition, which is held in April and handled by the Williamston Regional Office staff.



Congressman Butterfield presents Tamaeo Moore with the Congressional Arts Competition Certificate.

How to contact

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- Vance - Henderson - \$768,000 to widen Beckford Drive
- Vance - \$800,000 for I-85 improvements in Vance County
- Granville - Oxford Research Station – transferred property to the state for agricultural research
- Vance - Henderson - \$72,750 for downtown renovation
- Vance - Henderson - \$100,000 grant for personnel, equipment and technology at H. Leslie Perry Memorial Library as part of the “Embassy Project”

- Halifax and Northampton - Lake Gaston - \$100,000 – removal of invasive plants from Lake Gaston
- Northampton - Gaston - \$353,000 in grants and low-interest loans needed to build a new police facility

- Northampton - Northampton Wellness and Cultural Complex - \$600,000 in grants and \$1.7 million in federal low-interest loan
- Northampton - \$1.8 million for Advance Vehicle Research Center
- Halifax and Northampton - \$1.65 million for Halifax Northampton Regional Airport
- Halifax - Roanoke Rapids - \$1.2 million for road improvements

- Pasquotank - Elizabeth City - \$500,000 Airship Management Services for defense blimp research and development
- Pasquotank - Elizabeth City - \$512,000 for Rails to Trails project
- Pasquotank - Great Dismal Swamp Canal - \$850,000

- Warren County - \$600,000 low-interest loan for water system improvements

- Edgecombe and Nash - Rocky Mount - \$5.1 million for Downtown Streetscape Project
- Edgecombe and Nash - Rocky Mount - \$382,750 for assessment and clean up in the Douglas Block area

- Wilson - Wilson - \$1 million for wastewater treatment plant
- Wilson - Wilson - \$1 million – Outer Loop Construction project

- Wayne - Goldsboro - \$800,000 for US-70 Goldsboro Bypass

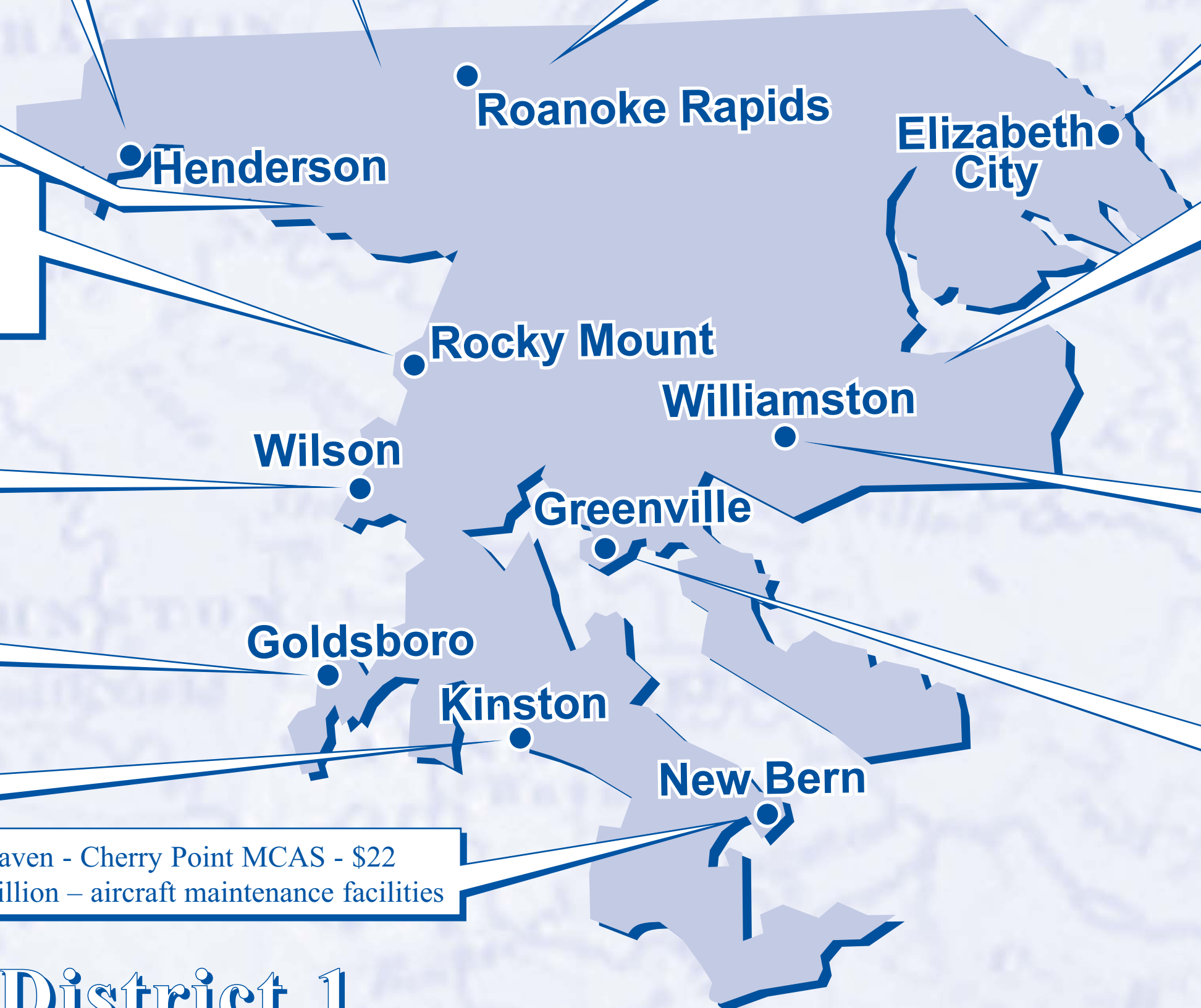
- Lenoir County - \$123,033 grant for water system improvements
- Lenoir – Kinston - Lenoir Community College - \$240,000 for a training program in captioning and training of court reporters

- Craven - Cherry Point MCAS - \$22 million – aircraft maintenance facilities

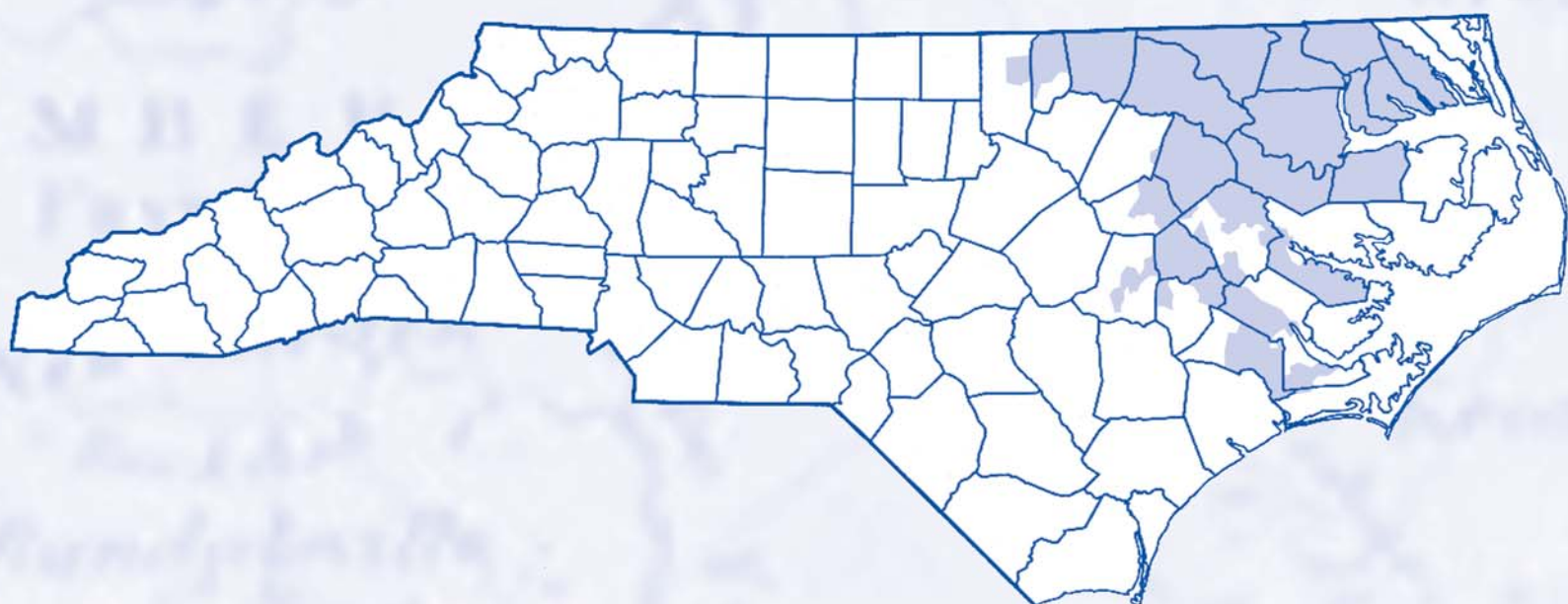
- Washington - Cresswell - \$68,100 in grants and loans for Cresswell Volunteer Fire Department to repair its first response vehicle
- Washington County - \$500,000 grant for wastewater improvements
- Washington - Washington County Hospital - \$300,000 grant for an upgrade of the emergency room
- Beaufort County Schools - \$114,211 grant for Interactive Video Conferencing among counties three high schools

- Martin County - \$600,000 low-interest federal loan for water system improvements

- Pitt - Greenville - \$2.95 million for buses and Intermodal Facility
- Pitt - Greenville - \$1.5 million for Greenways project
- Pitt - Greenville - \$60,000 grant for Green Mill Run Stream restoration project



North Carolina - District 1



Reaching from the eastern edges of the Piedmont to the coast of the Inner Banks, the First District includes all or part of 23 counties in eastern North Carolina. It's a large and diverse region with a great many needs. According to the latest U.S. Census, the per capita income in the District is the lowest in the state and 27% below the state's median income. The rate of poverty in the First District is almost double that of the state and nearly 29% of children under the age of 18 living live in poverty. Nearly 5% of the homes in Hertford County don't have a kitchen; more than 2% of the homes in Bertie, Halifax and Northampton counties still don't have plumbing; and, more than 5% of the homes in Beaufort, Bertie, Gates, Halifax, Hertford and Northampton don't have a telephone. We must work closely together to find creative solutions. For my part as your U.S. Representative I will continue working hard to bring the federal resources needed to address these issues. As this map shows, over the past 18 months I have help secure more than \$44 million in federal resources for the region. We still have much to accomplish, but I look forward to working with and for the people of the First District on North Carolina in the year to come.