

26 | from such status, on any land area not otherwise designated as
27 | such pursuant to s. 288.0656(8) ~~s. 288.0656(7)~~.

28 | Section 2. Subsection (3) of section 163.3187, Florida
29 | Statutes, is amended to read:

30 | 163.3187 Process for adoption of small-scale comprehensive
31 | plan amendment.—

32 | (3) If the small scale development amendment involves a
33 | site within a rural area of opportunity as defined under s.
34 | 288.0656(3)(d) ~~s. 288.0656(2)(d)~~ for the duration of such
35 | designation, the 10-acre limit listed in subsection (1) shall be
36 | increased by 100 percent to 20 acres. The local government
37 | approving the small scale plan amendment shall certify to the
38 | state land planning agency that the plan amendment furthers the
39 | economic objectives set forth in the executive order issued
40 | under s. 288.0656(8) ~~s. 288.0656(7)~~, and the property subject to
41 | the plan amendment shall undergo public review to ensure that
42 | all concurrency requirements and federal, state, and local
43 | environmental permit requirements are met.

44 | Section 3. Subsection (2) of section 257.193, Florida
45 | Statutes, is amended to read:

46 | 257.193 Community Libraries in Caring Program.—

47 | (2) The purpose of the Community Libraries in Caring
48 | Program is to assist libraries in rural communities, as defined
49 | in s. 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ and subject to the provisions
50 | of s. 288.06561, to strengthen their collections and services,

51 improve literacy in their communities, and improve the economic
52 viability of their communities.

53 Section 4. Paragraph (f) is added to subsection (2) of
54 section 288.0001, Florida Statutes, to read:

55 288.0001 Economic Development Programs Evaluation.—The
56 Office of Economic and Demographic Research and the Office of
57 Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA)
58 shall develop and present to the Governor, the President of the
59 Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the
60 chairs of the legislative appropriations committees the Economic
61 Development Programs Evaluation.

62 (2) The Office of Economic and Demographic Research and
63 OPPAGA shall provide a detailed analysis of economic development
64 programs as provided in the following schedule:

65 (f) By January 1, 2020, and every 3 years thereafter, an
66 analysis of rural areas of opportunity and the Rural Economic
67 Development Initiative (REDI) established under s. 288.0656.

68 Section 5. Section 288.019, Florida Statutes, is amended
69 to read:

70 288.019 Rural considerations in grant review and
71 evaluation processes.—Notwithstanding any other law, and to the
72 fullest extent possible, the member agencies and organizations
73 of the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) as defined
74 in s. 288.0656(7)(a) ~~s. 288.0656(6)(a)~~ shall review all grant
75 and loan application evaluation criteria to ensure the fullest

76 | access for rural counties as defined in s. 288.0656(3) ~~s.~~
77 | ~~288.0656(2)~~ to resources available throughout the state.

78 | (1) Each REDI agency and organization shall review all
79 | evaluation and scoring procedures and develop modifications to
80 | those procedures which minimize the impact of a project within a
81 | rural area.

82 | (2) Evaluation criteria and scoring procedures must
83 | provide for an appropriate ranking based on the proportionate
84 | impact that projects have on a rural area when compared with
85 | similar project impacts on an urban area.

86 | (3) Evaluation criteria and scoring procedures must
87 | recognize the disparity of available fiscal resources for an
88 | equal level of financial support from an urban county and a
89 | rural county.

90 | (a) The evaluation criteria should weight contribution in
91 | proportion to the amount of funding available at the local
92 | level.

93 | (b) In-kind match should be allowed and applied as
94 | financial match when a county is experiencing financial distress
95 | through elevated unemployment at a rate in excess of the state's
96 | average by 5 percentage points or because of the loss of its ad
97 | valorem base.

98 | (4) For existing programs, the modified evaluation
99 | criteria and scoring procedure must be delivered to the
100 | department for distribution to the REDI agencies and

101 organizations. The REDI agencies and organizations shall review
102 and make comments. Future rules, programs, evaluation criteria,
103 and scoring processes must be brought before a REDI meeting for
104 review, discussion, and recommendation to allow rural counties
105 fuller access to the state's resources.

106 Section 6. Section 288.0656, Florida Statutes, is amended
107 to read:

108 288.0656 Rural Economic Development Initiative.—

109 (1)~~(a)~~ Recognizing that rural communities and regions
110 continue to face extraordinary challenges in their efforts to
111 significantly improve their quality of life and economies,
112 specifically in terms of personal income, education,
113 infrastructure, access to healthcare, and job creation, ~~average~~
114 ~~wages, and strong tax bases~~, it is the intent of the Legislature
115 to encourage and facilitate:

116 (a) Job creation through the location and expansion of
117 ~~major economic development projects of significant scale in such~~
118 ~~rural communities.~~

119 (b) Improved community infrastructure, including, but not
120 limited to, roads, utilities, water and sewer, and broadband.

121 (c) The development and expansion of a skilled workforce.

122 (d) Improved access to healthcare.

123 (2)~~(b)~~ The Rural Economic Development Initiative, known as
124 "REDI," is created within the Department of Economic
125 Opportunity, and the participation of state and regional

126 agencies in this initiative is authorized.

127 (3)~~(2)~~ As used in this section, the term:

128 (a) "Catalyst project" means a business locating or
129 expanding in a rural area of opportunity to serve as an economic
130 generator of regional significance for the growth of a regional
131 target industry cluster. The project must provide capital
132 investment on a scale significant enough to affect the entire
133 region and result in the development of high-wage and high-skill
134 jobs.

135 (b) "Catalyst site" means a parcel or parcels of land
136 within a rural area of opportunity that has been prioritized as
137 a geographic site for economic development through partnerships
138 with state, regional, and local organizations. The site must be
139 reviewed by REDI and approved by the department for the purposes
140 of locating a catalyst project.

141 (c) "Economic distress" means conditions affecting the
142 fiscal and economic viability of a rural community, including
143 such factors as low per capita income, low per capita taxable
144 values, high unemployment, high underemployment, low weekly
145 earned wages compared to the state average, low housing values
146 compared to the state average, high percentages of the
147 population receiving public assistance, high poverty levels
148 compared to the state average, and a lack of year-round stable
149 employment opportunities.

150 (d) "Rural area of opportunity" means a rural community,

151 or a region composed of rural communities, designated by the
152 Governor, which has been adversely affected by ~~an extraordinary~~
153 ~~economic event~~, severe or chronic economic distress, and faces
154 competitive disadvantages such as low labor force participation,
155 low educational attainment levels, high unemployment, "D" or "F"
156 district grades pursuant to s. 1008.34, high infant mortality
157 rates, and high diabetes and obesity rates, and which ~~or a~~
158 ~~natural disaster or that~~ presents a unique economic development
159 opportunity of regional impact.

160 (e) "Rural community" means:

- 161 1. A county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.
- 162 2. A county with a population of 125,000 or fewer which is
163 contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.
- 164 3. A municipality within a county described in
165 subparagraph 1. or subparagraph 2.
- 166 4. An unincorporated federal enterprise community or an
167 incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or fewer and
168 an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or
169 resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as
170 rural, which has at least three or more of the economic distress
171 factors identified in paragraph (c) and verified by the
172 department.

173
174 For purposes of this paragraph, population shall be determined
175 in accordance with the most recent official estimate pursuant to

176 s. 186.901.

177 (4)~~(3)~~ REDI ~~is shall be~~ responsible for coordinating and
178 focusing the efforts and resources of state and regional
179 agencies on the challenges of the state's rural areas of
180 opportunity and economically distressed rural communities. REDI
181 shall work ~~problems which affect the fiscal, economic, and~~
182 ~~community viability of Florida's economically distressed rural~~
183 ~~communities, working~~ with local governments, community-based
184 organizations, and private organizations that have an interest
185 in the renewed prosperity and competitiveness of growth and
186 ~~development of these communities to find ways to balance~~
187 ~~environmental and growth management issues with local needs.~~

188 (5)~~(4)~~ REDI shall review and evaluate the impact of
189 statutes and rules on rural communities and shall work to
190 minimize any adverse impact and undertake outreach and capacity-
191 building efforts to improve rural communities' ability to
192 compete in a global economy.

193 (6)~~(5)~~ REDI shall facilitate better access to state
194 resources by promoting direct access and referrals to
195 appropriate state and regional agencies and statewide
196 organizations. ~~REDI may undertake outreach, capacity building,~~
197 ~~and other advocacy efforts to improve conditions in rural~~
198 ~~communities. These activities may include sponsorship of~~
199 ~~conferences and achievement awards.~~

200 (7) (a) REDI shall consist of the following members:

201 1. The executive director of the Department of Economic
202 Opportunity or his or her designee, who shall serve as the
203 chair.

204 2. The Secretary of Transportation or his or her designee.

205 3. The Secretary of Environmental Protection or his or her
206 designee.

207 4. The Commissioner of Agriculture or his or her designee.

208 5. The Secretary of Health Care Administration or his or
209 her designee.

210 6. The Commissioner of Education or his or her designee.

211 7. The President of Enterprise Florida, Inc., or his or
212 her designee.

213 8. The chair of the board of directors of CareerSource
214 Florida, Inc., or his or her designee.

215 9. The chair of the board of the regional economic
216 development organization for each of the rural areas of
217 opportunity or his or her designee.

218 10. Five members from the private sector, three of whom
219 shall be appointed by the executive director of the Department
220 of Economic Opportunity, one of whom shall be appointed by the
221 President of the Senate, and one of whom shall be appointed by
222 the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

223 (b) In making their appointments, the executive director,
224 the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
225 Representatives shall ensure that the appointments reflect the

226 diversity of Florida's business community and are representative
227 of the economic development goals in subsection (1).

228 (c) The executive director, the President of the Senate,
229 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall consider
230 appointees who reflect the state's racial, ethnic, and gender
231 diversity, and who are from rural communities.

232 (d) Each appointed member shall be appointed to a 2-year
233 term.

234 (e) Initial appointments shall be made by July 1. Member
235 terms shall expire on June 30.

236 (f) A vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of an
237 unexpired term and filled in the same manner as the original
238 appointment.

239 (g) An appointed member may be removed by the appointing
240 officer for cause. Absence of a member from three consecutive
241 meetings results in automatic removal.

242 (h) The chair may request the head of any state agency or
243 organization to serve on an ad hoc committee as needed to
244 address issues or projects relating to rural areas of
245 opportunity and economically distressed rural communities. The
246 chair shall consider requesting the following individuals to
247 serve on an ad hoc committee:

248 1. The executive director of the Fish and Wildlife
249 Conservation Commission or his or her designee.

250 2. The Secretary of State or his or her designee.

251 3. The Secretary of Children and Families or his or her
 252 designee.

253 4. The Secretary of Corrections or his or her designee.

254 5. The Secretary of Juvenile Justice or his or her
 255 designee.

256 6. The Secretary of Health Care Administration or his or
 257 her designee.

258 7. A board member of the Florida Regional Councils
 259 Association or his or her designee.

260 ~~(6)(a) By August 1 of each year, the head of each of the~~
 261 ~~following agencies and organizations shall designate a deputy~~
 262 ~~secretary or higher-level staff person from within the agency or~~
 263 ~~organization to serve as the REDI representative for the agency~~
 264 ~~or organization:~~

265 ~~1. The Department of Transportation.~~

266 ~~2. The Department of Environmental Protection.~~

267 ~~3. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.~~

268 ~~4. The Department of State.~~

269 ~~5. The Department of Health.~~

270 ~~6. The Department of Children and Families.~~

271 ~~7. The Department of Corrections.~~

272 ~~8. The Department of Education.~~

273 ~~9. The Department of Juvenile Justice.~~

274 ~~10. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.~~

275 ~~11. Each water management district.~~

- 276 | ~~12. Enterprise Florida, Inc.~~
- 277 | ~~13. CareerSource Florida, Inc.~~
- 278 | ~~14. VISIT Florida.~~
- 279 | ~~15. The Florida Regional Planning Council Association.~~
- 280 | ~~16. The Agency for Health Care Administration.~~
- 281 | ~~17. The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences~~
- 282 | ~~(IFAS).~~

283 |

284 | ~~An alternate for each designee shall also be chosen, and the~~

285 | ~~names of the designees and alternates shall be sent to the~~

286 | ~~executive director of the department.~~

287 | (i) ~~(b)~~ Each REDI member from a state agency or

288 | organization ~~representative must have comprehensive knowledge of~~

289 | ~~his or her agency's functions, both regulatory and service in~~

290 | ~~nature, and of the state's economic goals, policies, and~~

291 | ~~programs. This person~~ shall be the primary point of contact for

292 | his or her agency with REDI on issues and projects relating to

293 | rural areas of opportunity and economically distressed rural

294 | communities and with regard to expediting project review, shall

295 | ensure a prompt effective response to problems arising with

296 | regard to rural issues, and shall work closely with the other

297 | REDI members ~~representatives~~ in the identification of

298 | opportunities for preferential awards of program funds and

299 | allowances and waiver of program requirements when necessary to

300 | encourage and facilitate long-term private capital investment

301 and job creation. The member shall also ensure that each
302 district office or facility of his or her agency or organization
303 is informed about REDI and shall provide assistance throughout
304 the agency in the implementation of REDI activities.

305 ~~(c) The REDI representatives shall work with REDI in the~~
306 ~~review and evaluation of statutes and rules for adverse impact~~
307 ~~on rural communities and the development of alternative~~
308 ~~proposals to mitigate that impact.~~

309 ~~(d) Each REDI representative shall be responsible for~~
310 ~~ensuring that each district office or facility of his or her~~
311 ~~agency is informed about the Rural Economic Development~~
312 ~~Initiative and for providing assistance throughout the agency in~~
313 ~~the implementation of REDI activities.~~

314 (8) (7) (a) REDI may recommend to the Governor up to three
315 rural areas of opportunity. The Governor may by executive order
316 designate ~~up to three~~ rural areas of opportunity which will
317 establish these areas as priority assignments for REDI. as well
318 ~~as to allow~~ The Governor may, acting through REDI, ~~to~~ waive
319 criteria, requirements, or similar provisions of any economic
320 development incentive. Such incentives shall include, but are
321 not limited to, the Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund Program
322 under s. 288.106, the Quick Response Training Program under s.
323 288.047, the Quick Response Training Program for participants in
324 the welfare transition program under s. 288.047(8),
325 transportation projects under s. 339.2821, the brownfield

326 redevelopment bonus refund under s. 288.107, and the rural job
 327 tax credit program under ss. 212.098 and 220.1895.

328 (b) Designation as a rural area of opportunity under this
 329 subsection shall be contingent upon the execution of a
 330 memorandum of agreement among the department; the governing body
 331 of the county; and the governing bodies of any municipalities to
 332 be included within a rural area of opportunity. Such agreement
 333 shall specify the terms and conditions of the designation,
 334 including, but not limited to, the duties and responsibilities
 335 of the county and any participating municipalities to take
 336 actions designed to facilitate the retention and expansion of
 337 existing businesses in the area, as well as the recruitment of
 338 new businesses to the area.

339 (c) Each rural area of opportunity may designate catalyst
 340 projects, provided that each catalyst project is specifically
 341 recommended by REDI, identified as a catalyst project by
 342 Enterprise Florida, Inc., and confirmed as a catalyst project by
 343 the department. All state agencies and departments shall use all
 344 available tools and resources to the extent permissible by law
 345 to promote the creation and development of each catalyst project
 346 and the development of catalyst sites.

347 (9) (8) Before September 1 of each year, REDI shall submit
 348 a report to the department, the Governor, the President of the
 349 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a
 350 complete and detailed report, including, but not limited to ~~en~~

351 ~~all REDI activities for the previous fiscal year as a supplement~~
352 ~~to the department's annual report required under s. 20.60. This~~
353 ~~supplementary report must include:~~

354 (a) A description of the operations of ~~status report on~~
355 ~~all projects currently being coordinated through REDI, the~~
356 ~~number of preferential awards and allowances made pursuant to~~
357 ~~this section, the dollar amount of such awards, and the names of~~
358 ~~the recipients, and an evaluation of progress toward achieving~~
359 organizational goals and specific performance outcomes, as
360 established by the department.

361 (b) A description of the accomplishments of REDI and
362 identification of major trends, initiatives, or developments
363 affecting the performance of a program or activity coordinated
364 through REDI.

365 (c) A description of all waivers of program requirements
366 granted.

367 (d) ~~(e)~~ Information as to the economic impact of the
368 projects coordinated by REDI.

369 (e) ~~(d)~~ Recommendations based on the review and evaluation
370 of statutes and rules having an adverse impact on rural
371 communities and proposals to mitigate such adverse impacts.

372 Section 7. Section 288.06561, Florida Statutes, is amended
373 to read:

374 288.06561 Reduction or waiver of financial match
375 requirements.—Notwithstanding any other law, the member agencies

376 and organizations of the Rural Economic Development Initiative
 377 (REDI), as defined in s. 288.0656(7)(a) ~~s. 288.0656(6)(a)~~, shall
 378 review the financial match requirements for projects in rural
 379 areas as defined in s. 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~.

380 (1) Each agency and organization shall develop a proposal
 381 to waive or reduce the match requirement for rural areas.

382 (2) Agencies and organizations shall ensure that all
 383 proposals are submitted to the department for review by the REDI
 384 agencies.

385 (3) These proposals shall be delivered to the department
 386 for distribution to the REDI agencies and organizations. A
 387 meeting of REDI agencies and organizations must be called within
 388 30 days after receipt of such proposals for REDI comment and
 389 recommendations on each proposal.

390 (4) Waivers and reductions must be requested by the county
 391 or community, and such county or community must have three or
 392 more of the factors identified in s. 288.0656(3)(c) ~~s.~~
 393 ~~288.0656(2)(e)~~.

394 (5) Any other funds available to the project may be used
 395 for financial match of federal programs when there is fiscal
 396 hardship, and the match requirements may not be waived or
 397 reduced.

398 (6) When match requirements are not reduced or eliminated,
 399 donations of land, though usually not recognized as an in-kind
 400 match, may be permitted.

401 (7) To the fullest extent possible, agencies and
 402 organizations shall expedite the rule adoption and amendment
 403 process if necessary to incorporate the reduction in match by
 404 rural areas in fiscal distress.

405 (8) REDI shall include in its annual report an evaluation
 406 on the status of changes to rules, number of awards made with
 407 waivers, and recommendations for future changes.

408 Section 8. Paragraph (d) of subsection (6) of section
 409 290.0055, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

410 290.0055 Local nominating procedure.—

411 (6)

412 (d)1. The governing body of a jurisdiction which has
 413 nominated an application for an enterprise zone that is at least
 414 15 square miles and less than 20 square miles and includes a
 415 portion of the state designated as a rural area of opportunity
 416 under s. 288.0656(8) ~~s. 288.0656(7)~~ may apply to the department
 417 to expand the boundary of the existing enterprise zone by not
 418 more than 3 square miles.

419 2. The governing body of a jurisdiction which has
 420 nominated an application for an enterprise zone that is at least
 421 20 square miles and includes a portion of the state designated
 422 as a rural area of opportunity under s.288.0656(8) ~~s.~~
 423 ~~288.0656(7)~~ may apply to the department to expand the boundary
 424 of the existing enterprise zone by not more than 5 square miles.

425 3. An application to expand the boundary of an enterprise

426 zone under this paragraph must be submitted by December 31,
427 2013.

428 4. Notwithstanding the area limitations specified in
429 subsection (4), the department may approve the request for a
430 boundary amendment if the area continues to satisfy the
431 remaining requirements of this section.

432 5. The department shall establish the initial effective
433 date of an enterprise zone designated under this paragraph.

434 Section 9. Section 290.06561, Florida Statutes, is amended
435 to read:

436 290.06561 Designation of rural enterprise zone as catalyst
437 site.—Notwithstanding s. 290.0065(1), the Department of Economic
438 Opportunity, upon request of the host county, shall designate as
439 a rural enterprise zone any catalyst site as defined in s.
440 288.0656(3)(b) ~~s. 288.0656(2)(b)~~ that was approved before
441 January 1, 2010, and that is not located in an existing rural
442 enterprise zone. The request from the host county must include
443 the legal description of the catalyst site and the name and
444 contact information for the county development authority
445 responsible for managing the catalyst site. The designation
446 shall provide businesses locating within the catalyst site the
447 same eligibility for economic incentives and other benefits of a
448 rural enterprise zone designated under s. 290.0065. The
449 reporting criteria for a catalyst site designated as a rural
450 enterprise zone under this section are the same as for other

451 rural enterprise zones. Host county development authorities may
452 enter into memoranda of agreement, as necessary, to coordinate
453 their efforts to implement this section.

454 Section 10. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section
455 337.403, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

456 337.403 Interference caused by utility; expenses.—

457 (1) If a utility that is placed upon, under, over, or
458 within the right-of-way limits of any public road or publicly
459 owned rail corridor is found by the authority to be unreasonably
460 interfering in any way with the convenient, safe, or continuous
461 use, or the maintenance, improvement, extension, or expansion,
462 of such public road or publicly owned rail corridor, the utility
463 owner shall, upon 30 days' written notice to the utility or its
464 agent by the authority, initiate the work necessary to alleviate
465 the interference at its own expense except as provided in
466 paragraphs (a)-(j). The work must be completed within such
467 reasonable time as stated in the notice or such time as agreed
468 to by the authority and the utility owner.

469 (h) If a municipally owned utility or county-owned utility
470 is located in a rural area of opportunity, as defined in s.
471 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~, and the department determines that
472 the utility is unable, and will not be able within the next 10
473 years, to pay for the cost of utility work necessitated by a
474 department project on the State Highway System, the department
475 may pay, in whole or in part, the cost of such utility work

476 performed by the department or its contractor.

477 Section 11. Subsection (7) of section 339.2818, Florida
 478 Statutes, is amended to read:

479 339.2818 Small County Outreach Program.—

480 (7) Subject to a specific appropriation in addition to
 481 funds annually appropriated for projects under this section, a
 482 municipality within a rural area of opportunity or a rural area
 483 of opportunity community designated under s. 288.0656(8) (a) ~~s.~~
 484 ~~288.0656(7) (a)~~ may compete for the additional project funding
 485 using the criteria listed in subsection (4) at up to 100 percent
 486 of project costs, excluding capacity improvement projects.

487 Section 12. Paragraph (c) of subsection (4) of section
 488 339.2819, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

489 339.2819 Transportation Regional Incentive Program.—

490 (4)

491 (c) The department shall give priority to projects that:

492 1. Provide connectivity to the Strategic Intermodal System
 493 developed under s. 339.64.

494 2. Support economic development and the movement of goods
 495 in rural areas of opportunity designated under s. 288.0656(8) ~~s.~~
 496 ~~288.0656(7)~~.

497 3. Are subject to a local ordinance that establishes
 498 corridor management techniques, including access management
 499 strategies, right-of-way acquisition and protection measures,
 500 appropriate land use strategies, zoning, and setback

501 requirements for adjacent land uses.

502 4. Improve connectivity between military installations and
 503 the Strategic Highway Network or the Strategic Rail Corridor
 504 Network.

505
 506 The department shall also consider the extent to which local
 507 matching funds are available to be committed to the project.

508 Section 13. Paragraph (b) of subsection (5) of section
 509 339.63, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

510 339.63 System facilities designated; additions and
 511 deletions.—

512 (5)

513 (b) A facility designated part of the Strategic Intermodal
 514 System pursuant to paragraph (a) that is within the jurisdiction
 515 of a local government that maintains a transportation
 516 concurrency system shall receive a waiver of transportation
 517 concurrency requirements applicable to Strategic Intermodal
 518 System facilities in order to accommodate any development at the
 519 facility which occurs pursuant to a building permit issued on or
 520 before December 31, 2017, but only if such facility is located:

521 1. Within an area designated pursuant to s. 288.0656(8) ~~s.~~
 522 ~~288.0656(7)~~ as a rural area of opportunity;

523 2. Within a rural enterprise zone as defined in s.
 524 290.004(5); or

525 3. Within 15 miles of the boundary of a rural area of

526 opportunity or a rural enterprise zone.

527 Section 14. Subsection (16) of section 479.16, Florida
 528 Statutes, is amended to read:

529 479.16 Signs for which permits are not required.—The
 530 following signs are exempt from the requirement that a permit
 531 for a sign be obtained under this chapter but are required to
 532 comply with s. 479.11(4)–(8), and subsections (15)–(20) may not
 533 be implemented or continued if the Federal Government notifies
 534 the department that implementation or continuation will
 535 adversely affect the allocation of federal funds to the
 536 department:

537 (16) Signs placed by a local tourist-oriented business
 538 located within a rural area of opportunity as defined in s.
 539 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ which are:

540 (a) Not more than 8 square feet in size or more than 4
 541 feet in height;

542 (b) Located only in rural areas on a facility that does
 543 not meet the definition of a limited access facility, as defined
 544 in s. 334.03;

545 (c) Located within 2 miles of the business location and at
 546 least 500 feet apart;

547 (d) Located only in two directions leading to the
 548 business; and

549 (e) Not located within the road right-of-way.
 550

551 A business placing such signs must be at least 4 miles from any
552 other business using this exemption and may not participate in
553 any other directional signage program by the department.

554

555 If the exemptions in subsections (15)-(20) are not implemented
556 or continued due to notification from the Federal Government
557 that the allocation of federal funds to the department will be
558 adversely impacted, the department shall provide notice to the
559 sign owner that the sign must be removed within 30 days after
560 receipt of the notice. If the sign is not removed within 30 days
561 after receipt of the notice by the sign owner, the department
562 may remove the sign, and the costs incurred in connection with
563 the sign removal shall be assessed against and collected from
564 the sign owner.

565 Section 15. Paragraph (d) of subsection (14) of section
566 627.6699, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

567 627.6699 Employee Health Care Access Act.—

568 (14) SMALL EMPLOYERS ACCESS PROGRAM.—

569 (d) Eligibility.—

570 1. Any small employer that is actively engaged in
571 business, has its principal place of business in this state,
572 employs up to 25 eligible employees on business days during the
573 preceding calendar year, employs at least 2 employees on the
574 first day of the plan year, and has had no prior coverage for
575 the last 6 months may participate.

576 2. Any municipality, county, school district, or hospital
 577 employer located in a rural community as defined in s.
 578 288.0656(3) ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ may participate.

579 3. Nursing home employers may participate.

580 4. Each dependent of a person eligible for coverage is
 581 also eligible to participate.

582
 583 Any employer participating in the program must do so until the
 584 end of the term for which the carrier providing the coverage is
 585 obligated to provide such coverage to the program. Coverage for
 586 a small employer group that ceases to meet the eligibility
 587 requirements of this section may be terminated at the end of the
 588 policy period for which the necessary premiums have been paid.

589 Section 16. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
 590 law.