

October 9, 2009

Luján Visits Taos, Santa Fe to Make Announcements

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Ben Ray Luján joined U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development State Director Terry Brunner to announce USDA Rural Development Grants in Santa Fe and Taos. Rep. Luján traveled to each community to make the announcement. During his visit to Taos, Rep. Luján toured the Kit Carson Electric Co-operative, an economic development center and the UNM-Taos Campus to view the solar array.

In Taos, Rep. Luján and Terry Brunner announced that the Kit Carson Electric Co-operative will receive \$100,000 to conduct energy audits for some of the businesses it services.

“This is funding that will serve the community well by helping to improve energy efficiency around Taos while supporting renewable energy development,” said Rep. Luján. “This is just the latest example of our renewed commitment to changing the way we use and generate energy. I’m proud that Taos has become a leader in renewable energy development and energy efficiency. From the solar project at UNM-Taos to today’s announcement, it is clear that Taos is

committed to be part of a clean energy future.”

According to the USDA, Kit Carson Electric Cooperative will use the \$100,000 grant to provide energy audits and renewable energy development assistance for agricultural producers and rural small businesses. This project will provide a minimum of 148 energy audits to rural businesses. Additionally, it will provide education and training on the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy at a minimum of 50 workshops and displays open to the public. Administered by USDA’s rural business cooperative program, the Rural Energy for America Program Grants/Energy Audit and Renewable Energy Development Assist (REAP/EA/REDA) programs are designed to help rural America become more energy efficient. The funding Kit Carson Electric Cooperative will receive will allow staff to review and provide information on how to save energy costs which, in turn, helps agriculture producers and rural small businesses to become more energy efficient and use renewable technologies.

After the announcement in Taos, Rep. Luján and Terry Brunner traveled to Santa Fe where they announced grants to the State of New Mexico Economic Development Department and the Regional Development Corporation to provide business opportunities for small rural business in New Mexico.

“At a time of economic difficulty, these grants will provide important services for small businesses throughout Northern New Mexico,” said Rep. Luján. “As someone who grew up in a rural town, I understand the importance of investments in rural communities, especially rural small businesses. In the communities that will receive these grants, small business is often the critical engine of economic development—whether it is a locally owned convenience store or a family restaurant. We know that these businesses benefit from planning and regional development, efforts that will be assisted by these grants.”

According to the USDA, the first award through Rural Development's Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) will be made to the State of New Mexico Economic Development Department. The \$99,000 grant will be used to provide money to an existing Revolving Loan Fund that will assist small businesses in various New Mexico MainStreet Districts. Technical assistance will be provided along with financial assistance. The second award through the Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) will be made to the Regional Development Corporation (RDC), a non-profit organization based in Santa Fe. The \$50,000 grant will be used to partially fund implementation of the initiatives under the Northern New Mexico Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI). The REDI plan proposes a regional business development program for businesses in several northern cities and counties. Under this program, the grant funds must be used in rural communities in Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, and Taos Counties.