

AFRICAN AMERICAN **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The African American Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce today its support of the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program. The grant program is designed to assist in the acquisition and construction of economic, cultural, or civic projects. Since the program began in 1985, almost \$850 million has been invested in industrial/commercial projects, cultural civic/historic projects, convention centers, and sports facilities. African American Businesses in Western Pennsylvania played a very minor role in providing the goods and services on these projects. Currently, there are no funds available to continue these projects across Pennsylvania. The Pa. General Assembly must authorize funding for these worthwhile projects.

Today there is reason for optimism. On January 12th, the African American Chamber of Commerce convened a group representing Pittsburgh's Black Leadership on economic development and gained agreement that we must work together to insure African Americans are included in every aspect of development for this region. Economic vitality for Western Pennsylvania means the inclusion of every segment of the population to insure our growth and survival. We also need to insure a future for our next generation business owners and professionals.

The mission of the African American Chamber of Commerce is to increase business opportunities for African American Business Owners and Professionals. Locally we are united in this effort to provide strong employment opportunities for pre-construction, construction and permanent jobs for African Americans in this region. The number concern of our organization is minority inclusion in all aspects of these initiatives.

We are planning a meeting, with the assistance of State Representatives Joseph Preston and William Robinson (co-sponsor of the Cranes/Robinson Bill), to meet with the Chairman of the State Legislative Black Caucus. The purpose of this meeting will be to present our support of the raising the debt ceiling to fund the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program.

A local plan is currently in place: Councilman Sala Udin serves as Chairman of the Oversight Committee. Dr. Mulugetta Birru, Executive Director for Economic Development, has assigned minority business consultants to work with the baseball and football stadiums and one to review all contracts for minority participation. In this way, African American Business Owners and Professional Consultants will be a part of this regional renaissance.