

For Immediate Release

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At the Plan B Advocacy Committee Meeting of the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania (held yesterday), Ron Porter, Chairman, opened the session by stating, "The economic development boom that is scheduled for Western Pennsylvania must include opportunities for full participation by the African American community. The African American Chamber of Commerce is pleased that our region is being aggressively marketed on a broad spectrum of activities that will result in a strengthened infrastructure. However, large-scale development projects will ring hollow if significant numbers of our local populace are not included".

Many key leaders of our region have publicly affirmed their commitment to assuring high levels of participation by African Americans. The leadership of the Working Together Consortium, the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, and a significant number of labor officials have expressed their support of a non-discriminatory hiring and selection process.

The Plan B Advocacy Committee of the Chamber expressed its concern that a high number of contractors will be recruited from outside of the region. Although it is expected the billions of dollars in anticipated construction will require expertise that may have to be recruited from outside of the region, the African American Chamber of Commerce strongly recommends the emphasis should be on utilization of local minority contractors and entrepreneurs. Where there are capacity constraints, the African American Chamber of Commerce encourages partnering with the broader local African American businesses. Through partnering activities, African American (and other) Businesses will be provided access and the opportunity to enhance their skills for competing in the economic development marketplace.

Mr. Porter concluded by saying, "Western Pennsylvania is on the threshold of a major revitalization. Our region must be characterized by full participation of all the diverse human assets, which populate Western Pennsylvania. The African American Chamber of Commerce stands ready to serve as full partner in assuring that the economic development activity that is projected for our region results in benefits for all".