



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the  
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# Economic Development in Canton

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JEFFERSON CITY – Canton, Missouri, situated on the Mississippi River in Lewis County, has a long and storied history with the river, and with agriculture. In the 1840's, Canton became a leader in pork packing due in part to its proximity to the river. As the Civil War got underway, an iron plow factory was built in Canton. Iron plows were needed to cut through the tough prairie grasses that covered the region. After the war, Daniel Broy patented a hand corn planter and began building them at his shop in Canton. The community also had a thriving wagon and buggy building business, a factory that produced buttons from mussel shells and another factory that produced brooms.

However, the same river that allowed goods and produce to be shipped from Canton and surrounding communities also played havoc with the town, flooding homes and businesses since the founding of the town in 1830 until a large levee was built in the 1960's. Today, folks in this riverfront community spend time at Mississippi Park or at Lock & Dam 20 watching the ferry crossing the river, maybe catching a glimpse of one of the riverboat "Queens" as they travel from St. Paul to New Orleans, or watching bald eagles fish the waters.

That ferry is the longest continuously operating ferry on the Mississippi River. It was chartered in 1853 and still hauls people and produce across the river to Illinois. In fact, grain farmers in the area still have to transport their grain by ferry to an elevator across the river in Illinois. This not only slows the delivery of goods, but the crossing can be dangerous because the top-heavy grain trucks often make the ferry unstable. That is about to change.

This week I had the honor of joining Governor Nixon, members of the Lewis County Industrial Development Authority, representatives from the Ursa Farmers' Cooperative and

local farmers for a big economic development announcement. The state of Missouri is awarding a \$2 million Community Development Block Grant to Canton to prepare a large site for a new grain elevator to be built by Ursa Farmers' Cooperative. The CDBG money will be used to clear ten blighted properties for the elevator. The site is the former home of Tri-State Fertilizer, an agricultural chemical company. The state grant will allow the property to be cleared as well as cleaning up contamination at the site. Once the site is ready, Ursa is planning to invest \$6 million to build the new elevator.

This project is a big deal in several ways. First of all, it will create jobs at a time when folks are still struggling with the economic downturn. It will take people to clean up the former fertilizer site, it will take people to build the new elevator, and the project will create permanent jobs for the people hired to operate the elevator.

The cleanup will also benefit the families of Canton by increasing local property values and making the area safe for families and children. A hazardous chemical used for years as an insecticide but now banned for safety reasons has been found about 200 feet from a school in Canton. Removing the contaminated soil from this site will benefit everyone in the community and is a great use of state resources.

This week's announcement is a major milestone for farmers in northeast Missouri. Development of the new grain elevator will provide closer and more economical service for our farmers and should provide a big economic boost to the community of Canton.

Agriculture is Missouri's number one industry, and this week's news will help our farmers compete more effectively in the global market by allowing them to move their goods to market faster, cheaper and more safely. By locating the new elevator below Lock & Dam 20, farmers will save about six cents per bushel in shipping costs.

I want to thank the governor, the Lewis County Industrial Development Authority, the folks at Ursa Farmers' Cooperative and everyone else who worked long and hard to make this project a reality. This project began about 18 months ago when I met with Gerald Jenkins, the manager of Ursa Farmers' Coop, and Bill Smith and Jim Upchurch with the Lewis County Industrial Development Authority. It's a great feeling when you work hard on a project that will benefit so many people, while also helping the men and women who farm for a living.

If you have any questions or comments about these or any other issues give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an e-mail at [wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov](mailto:wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov), or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 W. Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.