

## **PRESS RELEASE**

March 27, 2006

Contact: Chris Reed, 601-483-2661

### **U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor to join Miss., Ala. officials to launch Alliance**

MERIDIAN, Miss. — Assistant Secretary of Labor Emily Stover DeRocco will join Mississippi and Alabama officials this week to launch the Economic Transformation of West Alabama and East Mississippi Alliance, recently funded by a \$15 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor.

A press conference will be held Wednesday, March 29 at a 10 a.m. at Shelton State Community College. Alabama Gov. Bob Riley will announce at that time his appointments to the commission created by the project. Dr. Roy W. Johnson, chancellor of the Alabama College System, and Mike Grevey, president of the Montgomery Institute, will both deliver remarks.

The grants were announced in February, and were awarded based on a competitive process that emphasized innovative partnership, regional needs and connections between business and industry and education and training to foster workforce development with the Montgomery Institute serving as the operational partner.

The West Alabama/East Mississippi Alliance is one of only 13 projects funded through the Department of Labor's new WIRED Initiative, or Workforce Innovation for Regional Economic Development. Thirty-six counties along the Mississippi/Alabama border are involved in the collaboration. The area encompasses much of Alabama's Black Belt region, which has long faced economic distress. West Alabama shares a common history and culture with East Mississippi, including similar barriers to prosperity and assets that can be leveraged to spur progress.

Riley and Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi will each appoint four commission members to serve as the guiding advisory group for the three-year grant cycle. In addition, the president of the Montgomery Institute will sit on this governing commission.

DeRocco will bring a team of technical assistance experts from the Department of Labor and national consulting groups on global economic competitiveness and innovative education and leadership strategies to begin work with the grant partners following this event.

The West Alabama/East Mississippi WIRED Initiative will create a regional workforce credentialing system, develop entrepreneurship, link education and training to business and industry needs to create new jobs, and develop civic leadership that crosses boundaries to develop stronger regional partnerships for progress.

Four Mississippi and Alabama community colleges are lead partners in the WIRED Initiative. They include East Mississippi Community College, East Central Community College, Jones County Junior College, Meridian Community College, Alabama Southern Community College, Bevill State Community College, Shelton State Community College, George Wallace Community College (Selma). This collaboration also includes ADECA, both states' workforce development offices, local and state workforce development boards and federal agencies. Local leaders from West Alabama and key partners from East Mississippi will attend the event.

The event will take place at the Atrium on the campus of Shelton State Community College at 9500 Old Greensboro Road in Tuscaloosa.



Governor Bob Riley  
invites you to the launch of the

## **Economic Transformation Alliance of West Alabama & East Mississippi**

**Guest of Honor: Emily Stover DeRocco**  
Assistant Secretary for Employment & Training • U.S. Department of Labor

**Wednesday • March 29, 2006 • 10 a.m.**

Shelton State Community College • Tuscaloosa, Alabama  
The Atrium — Greensboro Road

### **Launching the Economic Transformation Alliance of West Alabama & East Mississippi**

**Wednesday • March 29, 2006 • 10 a.m.**



Join us at 10 a.m. and stay for lunch as we introduce the **Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development Initiative Grant (WIRED)**. West Alabama & East Mississippi were selected as one of 13 regions nationwide to receive a \$15 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, initiating this new, collaborative process. Pulling together, we will transform the economy of the region by focusing resources and best practices on workforce development, entrepreneurship training, industry recruitment and community leadership.

**Call Lew Drummond at 205-391-2347 or Jennifer Black at 205-391-3965 with questions.**

**Directions to Shelton State Community College**  
9500 Old Greensboro Road • Tuscaloosa, Alabama

From I/20-59, take ramp to Alabama 69 S exit; go 3.8 miles; turn right onto Mae Hinton Drive; campus straight ahead.  
Follow signs to parking.

From I/20-59, take  
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