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**Byrd Wins Back Funds for Appalachian Regional Commission**  
*Senator Champions Effort to Reverse Bush Budget Cutbacks*

WASHINGTON, D.C.... U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., Thursday successfully reversed a Bush Administration budget proposal that would have slashed funding for the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

"The ARC has a critical role in improving the quality of life for residents of West Virginia and the 12 other states in the region. But the Bush Administration's budget would have slashed more than half of the ARC budget for job initiatives and grants to communities for drinking water and wastewater systems. The Bush budget could have set progress in Appalachia back by years," Byrd explained.

The Bush Administration's Fiscal Year 2004 proposed budget of \$33.145 million for the ARC would have eliminated more than \$38 million from agency.

On Thursday, the Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously approved Byrd's request to restore the Bush Administration's budget cut and provide a full \$71 million to the ARC in the coming fiscal year.

"While Appalachia has made measurable progress during the last 38 years since the ARC was created, the region lags behind the nation in many respects. The cycle of poverty is still all too prevalent. Too many children go hungry. Too many willing, energetic workers are without jobs," Byrd said. "The ARC enables many of our most vulnerable citizens to pull themselves up by their own boot straps."

ARC programs fall into five broad areas: basic infrastructure, such as water and sewer systems and industrial parks; education and training, including job skills training and adult literacy programs to provide a stronger workforce; local leadership development that will enable communities to better plan their own economic futures; small businesses

assistance and entrepreneurship support; and access to health care.

"The Appalachian Regional Commission's comprehensive and sustained effort is making a difference. But the job is not yet done. A major reduction in funding for this agency would have a significant adverse impact on our common effort to create greater economic opportunity for the 22 million people of Appalachia. The ARC is on the right track. It is making progress. Now is not the time to turn our backs," Byrd stated.

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