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# ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY Delta Studies Center

## “A MESSAGE FROM THE CENTER” PEGGY R. WRIGHT

Spring marks the beginning of many activities, meetings, conferences, and training sessions. It has been extremely busy as the small staff of the Delta Studies Center continues to try to attend and document ongoing events across the region.

We are now actively engaged in preparation for the Mississippi Delta Grassroots Caucus D.C. Initiative in May. I would like to invite as many of you who can to join us again this year as we gather to articulate the paramount needs of the Delta such as disaster preparedness, healthcare inequities, I-69, housing, education and ways to continue providing much needed assistance to the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

## MISSISSIPPI DELTA GRASSROOTS CAUCUS HEADS TO WASHINGTON

The Mississippi Delta Grassroots Caucus will return to Washington DC on May 23-25, 2006. The purpose of this trip is to meet with members of Congress and to urge them to take a much greater action for the eight-state region that lies at America’s heart.

The challenges currently facing the Lower Mississippi Delta Region are the cuts in health care, agriculture, the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, and the expansion of the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) budget.

Hotel reservations for this conference can be made at the Radisson, Reagan National Airport, 2020 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, VA 22202, (703) 920-8600. The “Delta Caucus” group rate will be \$179 per night until April 23, 2006.

The registration fee for this meeting is \$25.00.

For more information and to register, please contact:

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<http://www.clt.astate.edu/dsc/MSDeltaGrassrootsCaucus.htm>

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# LARGE TURNOUT FOR MISSISSIPPI DELTA GRASSROOTS CAUCUS CONFERENCE



Little Rock Chamber of Commerce Reception  
Photo by: Peggy R. Wright

“the rest of us have got to fall in line behind you. We’ve got to support it, we’ve got to resource it, we’ve got to guide it, but it’s got to start at the local level with great ideas.”



L/R Peggy R. Wright, Director, ASU-Delta Studies Center and Arkansas State Caucus Co-Chair and Lee Powell, Director, Mississippi Delta Grassroots Caucus.  
Photo by: Christine Perry



L/R: Mike Beeb and Asa Hutchinson, Arkansas Gubernatorial Candidates.  
Photo by: Christine Perry

On Friday, January 27th, 2006, the Mississippi Delta Grassroots Caucus held its annual conference in the Great Hall at the William Jefferson Clinton Presidential Library in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Sponsors for the conference were:

- Nucor Yamato Steel Company and Nucor Steel of Arkansas;
- Southern Bankcorp;
- Housing Assistance Council;
- ASU - Delta Studies Center;
- G.A. Wildman, Alabama.

A reception was held on Thursday, January 26th at the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce with over 240 in attendance which set the stage for the conference. The reception featured speakers: Jo Luck, CEO and President of Heifer International, Dr. Les Wyatt, President of Arkansas State University, Dr. Otto Loewer, Crossroads Coalition, and Hideichiro Chikahiro, President, Hino Motors Manufacturing, Detroit, Michigan.

The evening ended with a 2006 Arkansas Lieutenant Governor’s panel discussion on “Economic Development in the Delta,” moderated by Peggy R. Wright, Director of the Arkansas State University - Delta Studies Center.

Friday’s sessions featured speakers such as the 2006 Arkansas Gubernatorial Candidates Mike Beebe, and Asa Hutchinson as well as luncheon speakers, General Wesley Clark, Congressman Marion Berry, and Mike Ross.

There were also three major panel discussions which focused on:

- Economic Development;
- Education, and Job Training;
- and Disaster Relief and Rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina.

During the opening session, the Arkansas Gubernatorial Candidates shared their views on four Delta topics:

- Education;
- Healthcare;
- Delta Regional Authority;
- and Economic Development.

The debate began with the topic of education. Both candidates believed preschool education should be a priority. Candidate Mike Beebe stressed the importance of “focusing more resources on the lower grades so that children can be more prepared for the upper levels and continued higher education.” Asa Hutchinson discussed the importance of workforce education through the use of community colleges.

The next subject was health-care. Both candidates stressed the importance of educating and keeping healthcare providers (nurses and doctors) in the area. As Mike Beebe stated “it is much easier to raise our own in the Delta and educate them and keep them here than it is to try and attract others from the outside to come into the Delta.” Asa Hutchinson took this idea a step further to include the community and veteran healthcare centers.

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## MISSISSIPPI DELTA GRASSROOTS CAUCUS CONFERENCE CONTINUED

In the area of Economic Development, Asa Hutchison discussed stimulating the economy by "looking at innovation, regional cooperation, Federal Grant Support, and State Incentives." His peer Mike Beebe focused on the concept that "local people, local regional partnerships, local innovation working in partnerships with state and federal government is a way to increase the economic opportunities and jobs."

The next series of speakers included General Wesley Clark and Congressmen Marion Berry and Mike Ross who spoke during the luncheon portion of the conference.

The first luncheon speaker was General Wesley Clark. Clark spoke about local leadership and how that "in the Delta, we've got to get local initiative working. We got to get people in communities with good ideas where we can take advantage of local skills, local interest, and local knowledge."

He ended by saying that "the rest of us have got to fall in line behind you. We've got to support it, we've got to resource it, we've got to guide it, but it's got to start at the local level with great ideas."

The next to speak was Congressman Marion Berry who discussed healthcare. He declared that "we know how to empower the American people so they can have a healthcare system that they can afford and it works for everyone, and it is something that we can and should do."

He went on to say that in the end "good people working together for the common good, makes the hurricane pale in com-

parison. It is the most powerful force on the planet."

The final speaker was Congressman Mike Ross who spoke about the future of the Delta. He discussed the many positives that have come from the development of the Delta Regional Authority, but noted that even with all of these positives there is still much work to be done. And in the end, according to Congressman Ross, "our generation, I believe have a unique obligation to all to do our part to try and leave this country just a little bit better than we found it for our children and grandchildren."

This conference set the stage for the upcoming Mississippi Delta Grassroots Caucus D.C. Initiative that will be held in May. Attendees will get the chance to sit down with their representatives to discuss issues in the Delta.

For more information on this conference as well as the upcoming trip to Washington DC, please visit our Web Site at <http://www.clt.astate.edu/dsc/MSDeltaGrassrootsCaucus.htm> or contact:

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L/R: General Wesley Clark, Congressman Marion Berry, and Congressman Mike Ross.  
Photo by: Christine Perry



Conference Attendees at the Friday's session of the Mississippi Delta Grassroots Caucus Conference.  
Photo by: Christine Perry



Congressman Marion Berry, one of the Mississippi Delta Grassroots Luncheon Speaker  
Photo by: Christine Perry



Conference Attendees at the Friday's session of the Mississippi Delta Grassroots Caucus Conference.  
Photo by: Christine Perry

## DR. ANDY JONES LOWER MISSISSIPPI DELTA SERVICE CORPS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RETIRES



L/R: New Executive Director, Mrs. Valeria Pennington and Dr. Andy Jones.  
Photo by: Peggy R. Wright



L/R: Mr. Willie Burnside, current LMDSC Board President and Mayor of Hollandale, MS, Dr. Andy Jones, and Peggy R. Wright, ASU-DSC Director  
Photo by: Peggy R. Wright

On Monday, February 20, 2006, Peggy R. Wright, Director of the ASU-Delta Studies Center and former president of the Lower Mississippi Delta Service Corps Board (LMDSC) attended the retirement party for Dr. Andy Jones. Dr. Jones is retiring as Executive Director for the LMDSC after 9 years of service.

The LMDSC, which began in 1995 as a pilot program, governs Corps projects in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. It has seen tremendous growth over the years and now devotes 80% of its resources toward needs of children, youth, and families with service projects that address education, health, and housing needs.

Upon Dr. Jones retirement, Mrs. Valeria Pennington will step on board as the new Executive Director of the 11 year old program.

“Though Dr. Jones retirement is difficult, we respect his decision to leave the LMDSC so that he may spend more time with his family,” Wright said.

“I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mrs. Pennington on her promotion to Executive Director. There is no doubt that she will continue to move the Delta Service Corp in a positive direction as we move forward to create positive change across the Lower Mississippi Delta.”

For more information, on the LMDSC, go to their Web Site at: <http://www.deltaservicecorps.org/index.html>

## “ARKANSAS SOIL AND WATER CONFERENCE” LUNCHEON HELD



Former ASU-Delta Studies Center Rural Development Manager Mr. Burr Swann speaks at the “Soil and Water” luncheon.  
Photo by Peggy R. Wright

ASU-Delta Studies Center Director, Peggy R. Wright attended the Arkansas Soil & Water Education Conference luncheon on January 12, 2006 held at the Arkansas State University’s Convocation Center.

This years keynote speaker was Arkansas’ 1st Congressional District Congressman Marion Berry. Representative Berry addressed various issues currently facing the Agricultural business.

Berry discussed how the hurricanes, drought, high fuel and input costs have damaged Arkansas agriculture. This phenomenon wasn’t anything anyone could predict but he is cautiously hopeful that the next

farm bill Congress can address some of these issues.

He did however stress that it was still too early to predict what the farm bill will encompass. It was his hope that the bill would focus on the continuation of all conservation programs.

He ended his address by “stating that “when people work together for the common good, we are more powerful than hurricanes, tornadoes, floods or any other natural force.”

For more information, on this or other upcoming conferences on agriculture just visit their Web Site at: <http://agri.astate.edu/>

## PERRY ATTENDS “FIELDWORK AND CURRENT DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES WORKSHOP”

As a part of the ASU-Delta Studies Center’s Oral History efforts, ASU-DSC’s Christine Perry attended the “Fieldwork and Current Technologies Workshop” conducted by Dr. Douglas Boyd. Dr. Boyd is the Oral History Program Manager at the Kentucky Historical Society in Frankfort, Kentucky.

The focus of this workshop was digital audio basics, portable recorder/format comparison, and the role of the computer and audio editing. Due to time constraints, only the first two components were discussed.

The workshop began with the basic terminology for recording digital information. In this session, Dr. Boyd discussed the difference between analog and digital recordings and their qualities. He explained the importance of sampling rate and bit depth and cautioned workshop attendees against over compressed audio. This, according to Boyd,

actually reduces the quality of the recording.

The remaining information presented centered on the various digital devices available in today’s market. Dr. Boyd proposed that before equipment is purchased these questions should be answered:

- How much should be spent?
- How familiar are the individuals working on the project with computers?
- What is the infrastructural support for this project?
- What is the outcome?
- What features are important?

With this quickly changing technology, it is important for Oral History Projects to have a clear focus on project needs as well as current and long range plans before buying digital recording equipment. These questions can help many researchers

purchase items that will benefit their programs for years to come.

Some of the digital recorders that should be around for the next few years and do good quality audio recordings are:

- Marantz CDR300
- Marantz CDR420 - comes with hard drive and MP3 mode.
- Marantz PMD670 - will be around for awhile.
- Marantz PMD660 - the best of the bunch if all you want to do is record.
- Marantz PMD671 - the highest recording quality.

For more information concerning the ASU-Delta Studies Center’s Oral History Project, please visit our Web Site at <http://www.clt.astate.edu/dsc> or call us at (870) 972-2325 or toll free at 1-877-731-3020.

## CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER - “CORETTA SCOTT KING” (APRIL 27, 1927 - JANUARY 30, 2006)



Mrs. Coretta Scott King

On January 30, 2006 America lost another one of its great civil rights heroes, Mrs. Coretta Scott King. Mrs. King, the wife of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was laid to rest on Saturday, February 4th.

Mrs. King was more than Dr. King’s devoted wife, she was also a mother and a civil rights leader. She took up the legacy of her late husband upon his death working to support social justices as well as preserving her husband legacy.

In this commitment, Mrs. King developed a building based in Atlanta called the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change as a living memorial to Dr. King’s life and philosophy. She would devote most of her time to this endeavor as founding President, Chair, and Chief Operating Executive Officer for twenty-seven years.

Her quiet reserve, grace, and perseverance will be remembered by many as we mourn her loss.

## JONESBORO RESIDENTS GATHER TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR'S BIRTHDAY

On the twentieth year of the celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, Jonesboro residents gathered together at the St. Bernard's Auditorium to honor Dr. King's legacy.

This year's keynote speaker was Pastor Adrian Rogers of the Fullness of Joy Church. Pastor Rogers stated "Jonesboro must address our differences. We must respect our differences, and we have to respect each other."

During his speech, Rogers, discussed three areas in which the City of Jonesboro could improve upon that would support a better tomorrow and they were:

- the city Government needs to be more reflective of its communities diverse population;
- more African-American teachers need to be hired in area schools;

- and the city needs a better system of laws for fines and missed court appearances.

One of the clearest signs that race is still a factor in Jonesboro, is the lack of racial diversity in city government. According to Pastor Rogers, "it is time for our city government to reflect our city." The government should be more reflective of the groups it represents.

But this disparity doesn't stop at the city government but can also be found in area schools. Many school systems in and around Jonesboro have very few black educators on staff. Children, according to Rogers, need "to see teachers that look like them."

Pastor Rogers also expressed his dissatisfaction with area schools tendency to use King's holiday as a flex or in-service training day. This

day should be used as it was intended a day of service and remembrance of a man who believed in equality for all.

Finally, Rogers discussed the laws behind fines and missed court appearances. According to the Pastor, it is time "to stop putting people in jail for not paying fines or missing their court appearances." Though he doesn't advocate that individuals disobey the law, however, he does feel the system could find a better solution that wouldn't require individuals to lose their jobs for a first time offense.

In the end, according to Adrian Rogers, "the best days for this city are tomorrow and beyond, but it should benefit every aspect of our community. Let's show people what can be done when we work together."

## NEWLY RELEASED REPORTS

### **Innovative State Policies to Reduce Poverty and Expand the Middle Class**

The new report by Sodexo Foundation focuses on asset building policies that hold keys to reducing poverty in American. Some of the programs featured in this piece are: Arkansas' Career Pathways initiative, Workforce Improvement Grant Program and Individual Development Accounts, Georgia's HOPE grants and GoodWorks initiative, and Louisiana's STATE Saving program. To learn more about each of these programs and more go to their Site at: <http://www.sodexhousa.com/press-releases/pr120705.asp>.

### **Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends**

This report discusses the growing income equality between the lower and top fifth of American families. Four southern states—Tennessee, Louisiana, Kentucky, and North Carolina—are among the ten states in the nation with the largest income gaps between the top and bottom fifths of families. For more information go to: [http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/studies\\_pulling\\_apart\\_2006](http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/studies_pulling_apart_2006).

## NEWLY RELEASED REPORTS CONTINUED

### **Is manufacturing housing a good alternative for low-income families?**

A new report from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development compares owned manufactured housing to rental housing and traditional owned housing as an option for low-income households. Characteristics studied include housing quality, cost and affordability, as well as neighborhood quality. Download the full report, at

<http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/IsManufacturedHousingAGoodAlternativeForLow-IncomeFamiliesEvidenceFromTheAmericanHousingSurvey.pdf>.

### **Hispanic Population Growth Balances Long-Term Loss in Rural America**

Hispanic population growth has helped to slow long-term population loss in rural America, points out a new publication from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service. *Rural Hispanics at a Glance* discusses these growth trends and also provides a snapshot of Hispanics living in nonmetro counties.

Download the brochure at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB8/>

### **The Role of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Markets**

A report by the Congress of the United States, Congressional Budget Office (CBO) highlights the diversity and economic importance of America's immigrants. Immigrants now represent nearly 12 percent of the population and 15 percent of the labor force. More than 40 percent of the current foreign labor force are younger and less educated and are from Mexico and Central America. Many of these individuals fill hard to staff positions in manufacturing, construction and hospitality industries. To learn more visit: <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/68xx/doc6853/11-10-Immigration.pdf>.

### **Funding for Public Colleges and Universities continues to lose battle with enrollment growth and inflation**

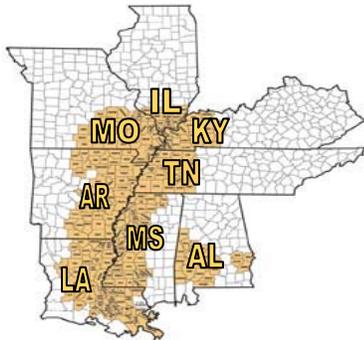
The new Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) brief focuses on inadequate state support for Colleges and Universities. The report highlights the decline in public support and the affect it has on making colleges unaffordable for working families. For more information and a state-by-state analysis of the change in higher education funding during the years 2001 to 2005 visit:

<http://www.sreb.org/main/EdData/Bulletin/06E03-FBB0206.pdf>.

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*Lower Mississippi Delta Region*



We're on the web  
<http://www.clt.astate.edu/dsc>

#### UPCOMING EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

##### **Atlanta Conference for S&T Policies: US-EU Policies for Research & Innovation Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA \* May 18-26, 2006**

Both the U.S. and Europe see innovation as central to the future growth and vitality of their economies. Policies to encourage innovation need to lead in institutional learning and change across sectors. This conference explores the research base that informs those policies, in current international context. For more information, please go to <http://www.spp.gatech.edu/conference2006.php>

##### **2006 Arkansas Rural Development Conference Eureka Springs, Arkansas \* May 24-26, 2006**

This conference objective is to provide working knowledge about a variety of programs and services that are available to local communities and their leaders that can help them in their development, planning, and revitalization efforts. For more information, please visit their website at: <http://www.arkansas.gov/drs>