

NEWS

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U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

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from

Paul

Tsongas

MASSACHUSETTS' TOWNS AND TOWNSHIPS TO BECOME ELIGIBLE TO COMPETE FOR FEDERAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

Thirty-one Massachusetts townships and towns may soon become eligible to compete for federal grants now only available to urban centers defined as cities. Senator Paul Tsongas announced today that agreement has been reached by House and Senate conferees on an amendment to the Housing and Community Development Act of 1979 that would permit smaller communities to apply for "Small Cities" grants under the Urban Development Action Grant program in the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

As a member of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, Tsongas supported the successful effort to include towns and townships in the Action Grant program. "The change means that towns and townships would be able to take advantage of economic development opportunities to address problems of unemployment, deteriorated housing, poverty and blight which are found in both large and small population centers," said Tsongas. "It also means there is now a recognition that many of our smaller communities have problems similar to our larger urban areas and their attempts to remedy them should not go unaided merely because of population factors," he added.

Congressman Silvio Conte (D-Pittsfield), ranking minority member of the House Appropriations Committee, said that, "Many of our smaller communities have been frustrated by the limited opportunities available to them for federal aid simply because of their population size. This amendment would bring about a needed change in our federal policy."

Ayer, Bourne, Dudley, Great Barrington, Lennox, Merrimac, Middleton, Salisbury, Shirley, Warren, West Bridgewater and Wrentham are the communities with populations of 2,500 or more which would become eligible to apply for the UDAG grants.

Buckland, Clarksburg, Hancock, Hardwick, Hawley, Heath, Huntington, Leydon, Millville, North Middleborough, Petersham, Plainfield, Rowe, Royalston, Sandisfield, Savey, Stockbridge, Williamsburg and Worthington are the communities with populations of 2,500 or less which would be able to participate in the program.

Tsongas pointed out that the amendment to the Housing and Community Development Act permits the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development to waive the "closely steered" test for grant eligibility if all other need requirements are met. The House-Senate conference committee working on the bill expects to complete final action on the measure soon.