



CONGRESSMAN TIM WALZ

1ST DISTRICT, MINNESOTA

H.R. 6383: THE SMALL TOWN AND REGIONAL VITALITY INVESTMENT ACT OF 2018

Bill Summary

- This legislation creates a **new investment** initiative by sharing federal revenues directly with local governments to address the major challenges facing their specific communities while tying those decisions to their region's long-term strategic framework.
- USDA Rural Development administers the **revenue sharing grants to local and regional governments** representing small towns and rural areas.
- The legislation utilizes the U.S. Economic Development Agency's current system of regional planning, called "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy" (CEDS) to ensure resources are used **efficiently** and **effectively**.
- Rather than the burdensome and often confusing process to access other funding streams, the Small Town and Regional Vitality Investment Act will **streamline** this process for counties while empowering local leaders to build up their communities and **create jobs** in the process

Who will qualify?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small towns and local units of government representing a population of 30,000 or less are eligible to apply to their County Board for the competitive grants.
How will they apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To receive the grants, counties will only need to submit a needs assessment, public engagement plan, and certify they are covered by a CEDS regional plan to ensure resources are spent efficiently and effectively.• Letters of support from local, regional, state and federal elected officials may be encouraged to demonstrate broad support and accountability for the investments.
What can the funds be used for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• affordable, quality child care and early education options• fixing or constructing public infrastructure such as water treatment facilities and substance abuse treatment centers• building housing for the local workforce• deploying high speed broadband and internet connections• protecting and enhancing health care services, including mental health care• training skilled workers for the jobs of today and tomorrow; attracting and retaining talent• creating more community amenities like art and music, sports, bike trails, and other outdoor recreational opportunities

Background

How Walz listened:

For the past 12 years, Rep. Walz and his team have crisscrossed southern Minnesota's rural communities meeting with constituents, hearing from local leaders in the public, non-profit and private sector. For the last 18 months, Walz and his staff have been on the Southern Minnesota Way of Life Tour to all 21 counties of Minnesota's First Congressional District.

- **Town Hall Meetings** across the First District open to anyone in the public to share opinions and ideas.
- **Small Town Round Table Discussions** with community leaders and citizens held in smaller towns from Luverne to Mountain Lake to Lewiston to dig into questions about what's working and not working with government programs.
- **3 Regional Vitality Summits** in Luverne, Waseca and Winona. Brought together 60-70 leaders in each town for a full day examining global trends, identifying regional strengths and discussing local needs and priorities.
- And **countless more one-on-one conversations** with mayors, county commissioners, business owners, chambers of commerce, educators, and non-profit and labor leaders. Many of these conversations were held in their offices and on main streets.

What Walz learned:

- **Critical challenges facing communities:** Leaders in small towns and rural areas are facing critical challenges when it comes to meeting the current and projected needs of their local residents and communities. Given the trends in America's population and tax base, there is an increasingly pressing need to address these challenges with a specific focus on the regional vitality of rural areas.
- **One size does not fit all:** We have seen that "one size does not fit all" when it comes to federal programs helping small towns with community development and investing in critical public infrastructure. Some government programs are underfunded and others have burdensome paperwork and red tape. Too often small towns forgo applying for government funding because it may cost too much or take too long to jump through the hoops. Simply put, small towns often say they don't believe there is a return on investment for all of the time, energy and money it takes to even apply for the federal funding.
- **Missed Opportunities:** The result of the federal headaches listed above are missed opportunities in making critical investments in protecting and enhancing the small town way of life.
- **H.R. 6383, the Small Town and Regional Vitality Investment Act** addresses these needs, and in doing so, we can help empower our small towns to achieve their full potential and thrive for decades to come.

