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AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCES \$66.4 MILLION FOR COMMUNITY FACILITIES PROJECTS IN RURAL AREAS

Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School receives over \$800,000

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the selection of nearly \$66.4 million in essential community facilities projects in 33 states throughout the country that are being funded immediately with federal funds provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This is the third wave of Recovery Act community facilities investments announced by USDA.

The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion School received an \$800,000 low-interest loan from this round of Recovery Act funds to purchase the facility it currently leases in Hadley. The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School is a public school offering Kindergarten through eighth grade education. The children are taught classes in English and Mandarin Chinese, allowing them the opportunity to develop bilingually. Their public school charter was received in February 2007, and the first classes offered that same school year. Currently eighty-four students are enrolled in grades Kindergarten through sixth grade and next school year 157 students are registered. PPCI will enroll a maximum of 300 students.

The PPCI intends to prepare students for academic and personal success through study and instruction aligned with the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework*, coupled with lessons in Chinese language and culture. PPCI's goals are to graduate students with excellent scholarship, high proficiency in Mandarin Chinese and English, and sensitivity to multiple cultures. The school's central location in the Pioneer Valley makes it easily accessible to many students in western Massachusetts. In the past, PPCI was operated out of multiple leased sites in the Amherst area. The school relocated to its present site in December 2008.

"Communities throughout the country are benefiting from the Recovery Act, and by building or upgrading facilities such as libraries, public buildings and community centers, we are investing in the future of rural America," Vilsack said. "These projects will advance the Administration's efforts to jumpstart the economy by creating jobs and economic development opportunities in hundreds of small towns."

This is the second time since May, 2009 that USDA Rural Development has obligated funds to Massachusetts through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. *Quabog on the Common*, an elder care facility in West Brookfield, received \$907,000 in Recovery Act funds to renovate a portion of their facility which will provide sub-acute care services for individuals requiring therapeutic medical assistance.

The funding announced today is being provided through USDA Rural Development's Community Facilities program, which helps finance essential community facilities for public use in rural areas. These facilities include childcare centers, hospitals, medical clinics, assisted living facilities, fire and rescue stations, police stations, community centers, public buildings and transportation. Through this program, USDA ensures that such facilities are available to all rural residents. These funds are available to public bodies, non-profit organizations and recognized Indian tribes.

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