

DENIS WASHINGTON – CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
TEXAMERICAS CENTER
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE AND TECHNOLOGY
SEPTEMBER 26, 2011

Good Morning.

My name is Denis Washington and I am the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the TexAmericas Center.

As you may know, TexAmericas Center was established in 1998 by the Texas State Legislature as a special purpose district. Its mission has been to redevelop excess military properties subjected to both the 1995 and 2005 rounds of Base Realignment and Closure. Our goal has been to place the property at Red River Army Depot and the former Lone Star Army Ammunition Plant back into productive use - with emphasis on job creation, job retention, and increase in the tax base.

The organization's name used to be Red River Redevelopment Authority, but was changed in 2011 to TexAmericas Center to create a more defined identity that attracts interested parties both nationally and globally to our location.

The Board is composed of appointees of the Mayors of all the Cities within Bowie County plus appointees by the Bowie County Commissioner's Court and County Judge. The 15 members of our Board, our staff and the communities we serve have stood united in an effort to enhance the lives of our citizens with the the preservation of the existing workforce and to attract new business.

There is one figure in particular who has stood tall for all of us throughout the BRAC Process and related transition issues that have affected our community Mr. Chairman, you have been a guiding light for our mission and our successes, and we are thankful for the significant amount of time and energy you devoted to promote and serve this community's needs. Without you, the successes we have enjoyed so far would not be possible.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Johnson on behalf of TexAmericas Center Board, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to give this testimony, and thank you for being here today in this wonderful new building.

I would also like to thank Superintendent Paul Norton for the Texarkana Independent School District's hospitality today.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to share with you some of the accomplishments TexAmericas Center's has experienced in support of local workforce development.

I would then like to share with you some of the things we are doing now in support of collaborative efforts with industry, schools and institutions of higher learning.

Today, companies and government organizations located at TexAmericas Center boast nearly 1,000 jobs.

Support for Red River Army Depot is a strong component of what TexAmericas Center does . . . 75% of the jobs reported here are attributed to both government and commercial support for the

Depot. While we have been a strong partner with the Depot, we understand that we must insulate it from future Base Realignment actions.

Roughly 25% of employees at TexAmericas Center work in one of the 13 non-federal related companies we host. Staff reports that 1-3 companies per month come to us seeking space. Whereas a significant number of prospects once were searching for warehouse space, they are now seeking acreage to create industrial, energy and technology-oriented businesses.

During FY 2011, twelve prospects expressed an interest in relocating or establishing their business operations on TexAmericas Center's property. These entities' projected investments were in excess of \$1.8 billion and could create approximately 2,500 jobs. While the site selection process continues with some, we realize that not only are they interested in the land, water resources, utilities, infrastructure, and transportation, but desire to know more about cultural activities, professional job opportunities for spouses, and the local educational system and curriculum. What was considered unique by our Board Members, was one entity's inquiry about our proximity to international schools - *meaning a school that provided instruction in multiple languages and had a diversity of students and curriculum*. Our CEO recently remarked to our Board that, "World class academic credentials are critical to international companies".

TexAmericas Center spends a great deal of time and energy pursuing new opportunities, but it is also appropriate to acknowledge our close working relationship and efforts of the City of Texarkana, TX, the State of Texas Department of Economic Development and Tourism and the Texas A&M University system in their collaborative role in economic development. We continually forge these relationships knowing that the entire community benefits from all our endeavors including but not limited to new business relocation, and the employees and families that choose to reside in our region.

TexAmericas Center's acquisition of 12,000+ acres of land formerly occupied military installations that supplied various war theaters, are now being returned to the community for a different productive use. To ensure a wise re-introduction of the properties to the community, we realize the importance for teaming with our schools and institutions of higher learning. Let me share with you some of our recent initiatives.

- 1) TexAmericas Center is a participant in the PK-16 education initiative where STEM education pathways are a predominant focus.
- 2) TexAmericas Center is also part of the Texarkana Market Analysis Project and Business Advisory Council at Texas A&M Texarkana. These networks help us find ways to deploy business solutions and engage the academic community on ideas, including the STEM curriculum.
- 3) The Dean of the Engineering College at A&M and TexAmericas Center's CEO have been in detailed discussions about the use of TexAmericas Center as a living laboratory for environmental issues ranging from support for the Army's over \$200M environmental restoration program and TexAmericas Center's materials reclamation program where we are demolishing the old facilities and reusing the materials.
- 4) TexAmericas Center is working with a division of Texas A&M University in College Station to deploy millions of dollars in surplus electronics recycling production equipment in a for-profit model and working with the System's industrial alliances branch to bring high tech manufacturing to our area.

5) At the Community College and local School District level, TexAmericas Center's CEO has met with the President of Texarkana College and briefed the Texarkana Independent School District's science faculty and administration on collaborating on life sciences to include the development of an outdoor education center for both faculty continuing education and classroom enrichment.

6) This past summer, TexAmericas Center initiated our first ever comprehensive summer internship program where we introduce juniors/seniors in high school and college students to the world of work. We interned 4 students this year and plan to expand to 6 or more next year. 2 of the students worked independently in the field doing water chemistry on the public drinking water system and their work efforts actually helped effectively implement our water compliance program this summer.

7) Recently TexAmericas Center collaborated with Texarkana College for the creation a workforce training center. Branded "Texarkana College @ TexAmericas Center", this satellite campus is intended to support the academic and workforce training for Red River Army Depot, local commercial companies as well as provide dual credit courses with the surrounding community High Schools. The over 5,000 employees of Red River Army Depot and its associated contractors can use the facility to develop their technical skills and progress towards degree completion.

In our efforts to characterize the potential use of our property, we are dedicated to attracting compatible industries with our adjacent communities. We believe that being centered on job creation should not sacrifice the quality of life for our neighbors.

While some may say that education is abandoning academia for workforce education, it is our business leaders that share a desire for a more work-ready product. Current Texarkana, Texas City Manager, Dr. Larry Sullivan, in his former position as Texarkana Independent School District Superintendent, once solicited feedback from a group of businessmen and women. He asked them to tell him about the skills they desire to see in the product they were turning out. How can we better prepare them before they arrive at your door? To take it a step further, how do we attract, retain and convince those students to return to Texarkana should they go away for college and complete their degrees?

I believe that TexAmericas Center can be a stabilizing force in the economic future of Northeast Texas and Southwest Arkansas. In order to achieve that mission, the education system and job opportunities combined with economic development must share the vision about the needs for our workforce and for those industries/companies we wish to attract.

As I conclude, I would like to share a couple of thoughts.

STEM is an integral part of the success of our children and this community. Those existing skill sets and those being developed within our workforce will be vital to our mission in trying to persuade prospective companies to relocate or expand their operations in this region. In preparing our students for the challenges ahead, the greater the opportunity they are provided to have hands-on experiences, the more likely they will gravitate to a productive and rewarding career. We see this nexus as a key to a community's long-term viability.

So, on behalf of our Board, I want to thank you for your service, your kind attention for making the trip to Texarkana to show your support for STEM Education in Action: Preparing for Jobs of the Future.