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**RURAL POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE AND THE SOUTHERN RURAL
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE ANNOUNCE PUBLIC RELEASE OF WEB-BASED
DATA TOOLS TO AID RURAL LEADERS**

Raleigh, North Carolina; Columbia, Missouri – The Southern Rural Development Initiative (SRDI) and the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) announced today two web-based database policy tools for rural leaders seeking to understand and shape federal policy. Both data tools can be found on the web at: <http://circ.rupri.org/srdi>.

These tools provide rural leaders and policy makers clearer information about how federal policy priorities shape flows of funding. Through these tools, rural leaders can better articulate a federal policy partnership that better serves their needs. .

These two federal funds database tools are the product of a partnership between SRDI and the Rural Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri. “SRDI is excited by the practicality of these tools through this creative partnership with RUPRI. It is not easy to see or understand how federal programs touch our lives every day, and these two database tools will help rural leaders to better shape the policy partnership they need from the federal government,” says Jason Gray, SRDI Director of Policy and Research.

The first data tool allows users see 2001-2003 federal funding by federal agency, type of funds, and intended function. This custom query can also “filter-report” by different county classifications; for example, counties by poverty rates, metro/nonmetro status, or degree of ruralness.

The second database tool offers county summaries of key programs and missions funding patterns of the United States Department of Agriculture. The federal legislation that sets the five year policy and funding priorities, the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act, is currently being reauthorized by Congress. This tool helps rural leaders see the USDA funding patterns for agriculture, rural development and nutrition missions for their county.

The Southern Rural Development Initiative, started in 1993, provides practical tools and strategies for rural community leaders. The agency offers community-based policy, philanthropy, grassroots capacity-building, and economic development tools to build just and sustainable rural communities. Over the past year, the agency implemented policy initiatives in two communities in South Carolina and one in Louisiana; facilitated a community engagement process to secure state legislative authority to convert of a youth prison into a community learning center in Tallulah, LA; and implemented the Philanthropy Index process in twelve communities. The agency works across the twelve states of the rural South with offices in Raleigh and Asheville, NC.

The Rural Policy Research Institute provides unbiased analysis and information on the challenges, needs, and opportunities facing rural America. RUPRI's aim is to spur public dialogue and help policymakers understand the rural impacts of public policies and programs.

Today, RUPRI is housed within the Harry S Truman School of Public Affairs at the University of Missouri-Columbia and is a partnership with Iowa State University and the University of Nebraska. RUPRI's reach is national and international and is one of the world's preeminent sources of expertise and perspective on policies impacting rural places and people. RUPRI's activities encompass research, policy analysis and engagement, dissemination and outreach, and decision support tools. The work of RUPRI is conducted through a small core team based in Missouri, Washington DC, and Texas, and through four centers and a number of joint initiatives and panels located across the United States.