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Eight New Rural Opportunity Zones Counties Partner in Student Loan Repayment Program

The Kansas Department of Commerce has announced that eight additional counties certified by the Kansas Legislature to participate in the Rural Opportunity Zones (ROZ) program have decided to partner with the state in the student loan repayment program. Doniphan, Haskell, Meade, Morris, Nemaha, Ottawa, Rice and Stevens counties have voted to opt in to this portion of the ROZ program.

"The Rural Opportunity Zones program has done a great job in drawing residents and skilled workers to rural areas of Kansas," said Kansas Commerce Secretary Pat George. "As additional counties continue to partner with us, the initiative will provide benefits for more rural residents, communities and businesses."

Enacted in 2011 by Gov. Sam Brownback and the Legislature, the ROZ program allows qualifying individuals who move to a ROZ county to have their state income taxes waived for up to five years. In addition, counties that opt to partner with the state may offer student loan repayments of up to $15,000.

The ROZ program initially included 50 counties, 46 of which have opted to partner with the state in the student loan repayment program. In 2013, the Legislature expanded the program to include 73 counties. So far, 10 of the 23 newly designated ROZ counties have opted to participate in the program.

Since July 2011, the Department has received 989 applications for participation in the student loan repayment program from residents of 41 states. Applicants represent a wide variety of industries, with education and healthcare as the two largest professions.

For more information about the ROZ program, please visit KansasCommerce.com/RuralOpportunityZones.

The following counties have been certified by the Legislature as ROZ counties (italicized counties are 2013 additions):

Allen, *Anderson*, Barber, *Bourbon*, *Brown*, *Chase*, Chautauqua, Cheyenne, Clark, *Clay*, Cloud, *Coffey*, Comanche, Decatur, *Doniphan*, Edwards, Elk, *Ellsworth*, Gove, Graham, *Grant*, *Gray*, Greeley, Greenwood, Hamilton, Harper, *Haskell*, Hodgeman, *Jackson*, Jewell, Kearny, Kingman, Kiowa, Lane, Lincoln, *Linn*, Logan, Marion, *Marshall*, *Meade*, Mitchell, *Morris*, Morton, *Nemaha*, *Neosho*, Ness, Norton, Osborne, *Ottawa*, Pawnee, Phillips, Pratt, Rawlins, Republic, *Rice*, Rooks, Rush, Russell, Scott, Sheridan, Sherman, Smith, Stafford, Stanton, *Stevens*, Trego, Thomas, *Wabaunsee*, Wallace, Washington, Wichita, Wilson and Woodson.

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