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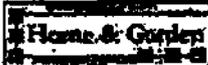
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## LOCAL - Quad-City delegates lobbying Congress By Ed Tibbetta/ QUAD-CITY TIMES

Seventy-five Quad-Citians are in Washington, D.C., to lobby Congress and federal agencies on a host of issues, and they represent the largest contingent to go on the annual spring trip since it was initiated six years ago.

The visit, today and Thursday, is coordinated by the Quad-City Development Group. Officials say the lobbying trip puts local officials in front of legislators and representatives of federal agencies that have a profound impact on the Quad-City economy and jobs base.

Among those is the U.S. Army Materiel Command, or AMC, which oversees the Rock Island Arsenal. Quad-City officials will meet with a top AMC official this week.

"What this trip is really about is compounding what we've been doing for several years," Bettendorf Mayor Ann Hutchinson said.

About 50 to 55 people were in the delegation last year.

This year, Quad-City officials will emphasize support for the Arsenal and the need for federal funding of a new Interstate 74 bridge between Moline and Bettendorf, as well as the development of passenger rail in the area.

From there, local officials will also press their own projects.

Davenport Mayor Charlie Brooke, who is joining the delegation for the first time, said seeking federal aid for infrastructure to open up development in west Davenport is a key issue with him, as is flood protection.

The congressional delegation is aware of many of the issues already, but personal contact with legislators and staffers is important, given the multitude of projects for which funding is sought — both across the country and in Iowa. A delegation from Cedar Rapids and Iowa City has already visited the nation's capital, and a Clinton-area group is due in May, said Bill Tate, the administrative assistant to U.S. Rep. Jim Leach, R-Iowa.

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"I am convinced that there's some truth to the old saw that it's not what you know but who you know," Brooke said.

Tate added that the trips have forced groups to think more regionally. That has happened as Cedar Rapids and Iowa City have combined their efforts and as Quad-City area governments have met in the weeks preceding their trip to determine goals.

Area officials believe the trips are directly responsible for such things as the earmarks in federal appropriations bills that have brought millions of dollars for a study of the Interstate 74 bridge issue and to build value on the Arsenal.

This year, it will be particularly important to press the bridge project as Congress prepares to authorize a new long-term transportation plan. Getting the bridge included in the plan will go a long way toward securing future funding, officials say.

Several private companies also are sending representatives. Robert Imler, the vice president for community and government relations for River Stone Group Inc. and a past participant, said it is important for the area economy and companies like River Stone to continue pressing the bridge issue.

"We ship materials to both sides of the river," he said, adding, "We have to keep it in front of the congressional delegation to keep it on their radar screen."

With the Bush administration seeking \$48 billion more in defense spending in fiscal 2003, largely a result of the war against terrorism and increased homeland security needs, that also presents the area with an opportunity.

"We're interested in how the Arsenal fits into that (increased budget)," said Thom Hart, the president of the Quad-City Development Group.

He said the delegation also will seek to impress upon transportation officials the area's desire to get passenger rail. With doubts about the long-term viability of Amtrak's long-distance routes, Hart said the area delegation is pressing the notion that regional routes, such as one contemplated from the Quad-Cities to Chicago, are worth federal investment.

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