

Nebraska's Senator Ben Nelson recently said that a Nebraska winery/microbrewery and a telecommunications company will expand operations thanks to more than \$6.6 million in loan guarantees announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

"These stimulus funds will guarantee loans that two vital Nebraska businesses need to grow, which will help keep our rural communities strong and attractive places to live," said Senator Nelson. "By promoting business expansion, job creation and economic growth in rural Nebraska, the stimulus funds also aid our state during tough economic times."

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that 12 businesses nationwide will receive \$56.2 million in loan guarantees through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The businesses are located in eight states: Nebraska, Alabama, Maine, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon and Wisconsin.

Nebraska banks and the companies receiving the loan guarantees:

Adams Bank & Trust, Imperial, for a \$5.7 million loan to allow a telecommunications company to expand telephone, internet, and video services to residential customers. The company is Allo Communications, which serves communities in western Nebraska.

State Bank of Table Rock, Pawnee City, for a \$93,600 loan to purchase bottling equipment for a winery and microbrewery. The company is Schilling Bridge in Pawnee City, which produces several varieties of wines and beers, and has a tasting room, gift shop and meeting/banquet room.

Brad Moline, President of Allo Communications said, "We are excited by the opportunities this loan will create. Allo Communications will use the funds to expand our fiber network infrastructure and improve residential and business services in Scottsbluff, Gering, Alliance and Ogallala. This will bring our customers world-class communications capabilities unmatched anywhere in Nebraska and competitive not only on a national scale but internationally, as well."

Mike Schilling, Schilling Bridge Owner and Brewer, said: "We're pleased that stimulus funds will help small businesses like ours as we work to revitalize rural America. The loan will enable us to buy new bottling machinery, and make our operations run more smoothly to better serve our customers."

The USDA said that funding for the 12 businesses nationwide is being made available through USDA Rural Development's Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program.

Eligible applicants include private businesses, cooperative organizations, corporations, partnerships, non-profit groups, federally recognized Indian tribes, public bodies and individuals. The funds will be targeted to creating and retaining quality jobs and serving difficult-to-reach populations and areas hardest hit by the current economic downturn.

The 12 projects announced will leverage \$5.6 million in private sector investments in addition to the USDA Rural Development assistance, the USDA said.