



Forum editorial: Schneider did great work for ND

Posted on Apr 16, 2015 at 1:33 a.m.

The state director of USDA Rural Development in North Dakota will wrap up a distinguished and productive five and a half years of service Sunday. Jasper Schneider has done an excellent job, not only by raising the agency's profile in the state but also by compiling a record of substantive investments and initiatives that will benefit North Dakotans for decades.

Shortly after Schneider had completed two years in the job, a Forum editorial noted:

"The federal dollars have been put to good use in the state," and Schneider and the USDA staff "have done an excellent job not only in accomplishing the agency's mandate but also in letting North Dakotans know about USDA's good work." That record of accomplishments was expanded in Schneider's subsequent years at the helm. As the Aug. 21, 2011, editorial stated, USDA Rural Development is "a federal program that works."

Schneider began his service just as North Dakota was entering a period of unprecedented growth in agriculture, energy and economic diversification. He harmonized his agency's programs to fit the new economy by building partnerships and collaborations in order to maximize the positive impacts of limited resources. And resources were limited, especially after federal budget sequestration cut dollars and personnel in federal agencies. Nevertheless, the director and a dedicated staff helped fund all sorts of projects in rural North Dakota that will have lasting impacts.

The list is long, but among the areas where rural development funds made a difference are health care, energy country infrastructure, affordable housing, broadband expansion and tribal needs. Some \$3 billion in grants and loans helped establish, expand and enhance all manner of rural services and facilities during Scheider's time on the job. During his watch, the agency developed the North Dakota 2.0 report, a guide, resource and planning initiative for smart investing in North Dakota, which can be a baseline/blueprint for the future.

Schneider, a former state legislator and private practice attorney, is the first to credit his staff for the impressive accomplishments of the past five years. And they deserve the accolades. But good leadership cannot be minimized.

Schneider's tenure was successful because he redefined the agency's role in North Dakota as an active partner in rural development, rather than just another federal program. The emphasis was on "active." Without an energetic director who immediately grasped the potential for wise investments and productive partnerships, USDA Rural Development would not have been as successful as it has been.

To be sure, North Dakota has not heard the last of Schneider. His commitment to public service will be expressed in other ways, and North Dakotans will benefit. We wish him well in whatever the future holds for him and his family. He has earned the respect and admiration of the people of his state for his excellent work at USDA Rural Development.

Forum editorials represent the opinion of Forum management and the newspaper's Editorial Board.

ADVERTISEMENT