

Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago
Fifth Annual Summit on Regional Competitiveness
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**Alliance Leadership Bestows First Mega-Region Visionary
Award**

MR. BOYLE: Ladies and gentlemen, can we have everyone please take your seats.

MS. O'BRIEN: Yes, if everyone could please take their seats. We're going to begin. And, just as a reminder with those yellow surveys, we will have staff coming around to your table to pick those up. So at your first opportunity, be sure to complete those. Just make sure everybody has a chance to sit.

So earlier this year when we began the planning for this year's Summit, we started talking about presenting an award. And while we were debating, well, who would be a good candidate for this award, it actually became a very quick and easy decision. I met with President Preckwinkle shortly after she first won the primary for the Cook County Board Presidency. I flew from Washington, D.C. to Chicago to get acquainted, and left knowing that Cook County was going to be in very good hands. She had many successes and she's had some tough days, but she is a committed public

servant. And she is a visionary.

Now, I get to introduce Paul Jones, the Alliance Chairman, who will make some brief remarks. Paul has been part of the Alliance since its inception, and he has steered our direction. He was steered to us -- let just me stop for a minute and say we are very fortunate to have Paul Jones because of the lovely and influential Julia Taylor. Julia, are you in the room? But I know Julia is here today, and I am profoundly grateful for that.

Paul is the retired Chairman and CEO of the global manufacturing company, A.O. Smith, headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Paul is a member of the Federal Signal Corporation Board of Directors, a member of the Wisconsin Energy Group Board of Directors, Rexnord Corporation, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. Paul has been a part of the Alliance leadership since its inception, and we greatly appreciate his commitment. Paul goes above and beyond for the Alliance. His passion for our mission is truly inspiring. I've learned a great deal from Paul. And it's an honor to have him as our Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, Paul Jones.

PAUL JONES: Well, thank you, Kelly, and thanks to all of you for being here today. This is our fifth one and it's always special to look around. I want to say a few

words about my commitment to the Alliance and why. First of all, being chairman, I have some interesting background that I think helps a little bit, in that I was born and raised in Illinois. And I have worked and lived in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin. It was during my tours, I was with G.E. in Indiana at two places, I was with U.S. Can in Oak Brook, and I've been with A.O. Smith for 12 years before I retired in Milwaukee. So I'm somewhat qualified in that I know the states reasonably well.

Also, when the OECD report came out and I was first brought up to speed on that, it made so much sense to me that, you know, forget where the state lines are, this region, as Kelly said earlier this morning, has been falling behind. We've not grown as fast as the rest of the country, and we can do better. And one of the things we can do -- I'll use one example that has come up a few times being Foxconn. I was first notified of the Foxconn opportunity in February. Obviously, we were sworn to secrecy, but the Wisconsin Energy Corporation was involved. They actually went to Taiwan to meet with them in one of the first meetings over there to make sure they'd have enough power.

I'm Co-Chair of the Water Council. We were involved early, because one of the things they're going to need is

water. Well, guess what else they're going to need, is around 10,000 employees from the area. And don't think Indiana is excluded, because I just heard a week ago that they need 200 to 250 civil engineers. And has anybody heard of Purdue, a great engineering school? This is going to impact the entire region. So, it's a very, very good example of what we can do, and the whole idea -- I've been on Chambers of Commerce in all the places I've lived recently. And, you know, it's always pretty much the same thing.

And this is an enlightened way of doing it with the regional approach. But Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle has been involved since before I was. She was involved with the OECD when they were first conducting interviews. She spent time meeting their policy team. She spoke at one of the early stakeholder meetings and went on to organize her counterparts in Chicagoland, meeting regularly and getting staffs to work together. We commend the work she's done for the region and for the area. And one of the things that the Alliance tries to do, we're not trying to replace any economic development group, we want us all to work together, anything we can do that can help us work together and not have borders, and President Preckwinkle has been leading that charge also. So today,

it's my pleasure to introduce Alliance Board Member and CMAP Executive Director Joe Szabo, who will provide some remarks about her leadership, and then we will present the Visionary Award. Joe?

JOSEPH SZABO: Well, thank you, Paul, and as he said, I am Joe Szabo. I am the Executive Director for the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, which is the planning organization for the 284 communities in 7 counties representing 8.5 million people here in Northeastern Illinois. And of course, the biggest county of those 7 is Cook County. And so, it's really a privilege to be here today to talk about firsthand the efforts of County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, and why she is so worthy to be the recipient of the very first Visionary Leader Award presented by the Alliance for Regional Development.

As I said, it's really fitting that the Alliance's first award go to a public servant that has made regional collaboration a true, true priority. And I've seen it firsthand because at CMAP, I can tell you from working with her that there has been no greater advocate than President Preckwinkle for developing, but truly, in advocating for and developing a shared vision on economic development, affordable housing, and so many other issues here in our region.

And her accomplishments within the county and beyond are many. It was Toni Preckwinkle that created the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development and its Economic Development Advisory Committee, which CMAP has the opportunity to be a member of, alongside of a broad range of public, private, and non-profit sector interests. She also realized the power of this 7-county region that Northeastern Illinois can have working together to promote a stronger regional economy and pull together the other county leaders to form the Chicago Regional Growth Initiative.

Another one of her successes was the Chicago Metrometals Consortium, which led our region to being designated in 2014 by the U.S. Department of Commerce as just one of 12 communities targeted nationally for manufacturing investment.

The partnership has brought together once again the 7 counties, the City of Chicago, and over 80 partners, including research institutions, workforce agencies, and training colleges, businesses and private member organizations, all collaborating to leverage more than \$46 million in public and private resources directly impacting 4,000 manufacturers in Illinois with a focus on strengthening fabricated metal, and machinery sectors.

The top priority for the region is the Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program known as the CREATE Program, a public-private partnership created to reduce rail congestion delays here in North America's freight hub, and eliminate those delays that negatively impact the flow of commerce, and negatively impact logistics in the Midwest. Toni has ensured that Cook County is a strong partner and a leader in the program.

And so these are just a few of the regional examples of collaboration during President Preckwinkle's tenure. My role as the head of the Planning Agency, and our role here at the Alliance for Regional Development, is to think about and lay the groundwork for what a more prosperous region will look like in the next 10, 20, and 30 years. Because of President Preckwinkle's work, the residents of Cook County, Northeastern Illinois, and our megaregion will have a more prosperous future. And so it's my honor to call up Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle as the first recipient of the Alliance for Regional Development's Visionary Leader Award. Madam President?

TONI PRECKWINKLE: Good morning. I want to thank Kelly, Paul, and especially Joe for that kind introduction. I'm grateful. I'm grateful as well for this award.

Actually, regional cooperation is something that I've worked very hard on over the last four years, and I'm accepting this award on behalf of all of the good folks who've worked on this regional collaboration. As you heard, it includes DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Will, McHenry, Cook -- did I miss anybody, and the City of Chicago. And it's an effort to create a unified and inclusive region. I'd like all of the folks in this room who are part of that collaboration, whether they are county executives or board chairs or economic development professionals, could you stand up so we can acknowledge you? Please do.

I want to particularly acknowledge Mike Jasso, who's in the back already standing. He's head of our Bureau of Economic Development, and he and his team have worked very hard as our participants in the collaboration. You know, you're well aware that economic development and economic growth don't start at any municipality and don't stop at any border, and that our assets and our strengths reside in us as a region. And my counterparts and I embarked on this effort, this collaboration four years ago, and Joe talked a little bit about some of the fruits of our labor. Let me share them again.

The Chicago Metrometals Consortium, CMMC, had a federal designation as a sector cluster, and we've been

working to support metal fabricators and machining sectors. Chicago Metro Exports is nationally recognized as a program assisting small businesses as they try to expand into global markets. We've worked on a foreign direct investment, FDI, strategy for our region, and an initiative to streamline and rationalize truck permitting, which for decades has been hopelessly complex in our region.

I want to thank the Alliance for championing collaboration and cooperation, and I want to commend it for its efforts to raise the profile of our tri-state region and foster economic growth based on the strengths and initiatives of the sub-regions. Again, I appreciate all of your good work, and thank you. Thank you all.

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