

New bonds help businesses

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The Illinois Finance Authority has announced a new tool to help Lake County businesses suffering from the twin hits of recession and the prolonged aftermath of damage from severe storms, tornadoes and flooding that came during the summer of 2008.

A total of \$1.5 billion in tax-exempt bond authority is available for Federal Emergency Management Agency-designated disaster areas covering 18 counties, including Lake. Midwestern Disaster Area Bonds have been authorized by the federal government as a money-saving incentive for eligible commercial, industrial, manufacturing, retail and public utility projects to help repair damage and restore jobs.

"This type of creative financing will help jump-start development in Illinois communities that need it most," said Illinois Finance Authority Executive Director Christopher Meister. "We're proud to partner with the federal government, Governor Pat Quinn and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to identify and support projects to repair disaster-related damage and create new jobs statewide."

In 2008, Lake County was particularly hard hit by floods with extensive flooding of the Fox River and Chain O' Lakes area where more than 400 structures were damaged.

At the same time, median earnings for Lake County workers dropped 2.5 percent between 2007 and 2008, while the statewide median wage rose by nearly 1 percent during the same period, which is estimated at a loss of nearly \$42.3 million in household income.

The Finance Authority has authorized the program after the Internal Revenue Service gave the state a new, broader interpretation to expand the program. Any business qualifies if its project requiring financing adds to the tax base and/or creates new jobs.

More details on the Midwestern Disaster Area Bond program are available at www.il-fa.com.