

## Building Coalitions That Get Results

### *RESTORING A MIDWESTERN COMMUNITY*

In March 2007, President Bush signed into law federal legislation which removed federal restrictions blocking St. Louis County, MO from building a nonfederal road to a new economic development zone just outside of St. Louis. The restrictions were put in place at the insistence of FEMA when some of the property was acquired in 1993 after the great floods of the Mississippi River. Despite years of pleas by the community involved (which had lost 70% of its tax base and was being forced to keep the flooded property and adjoining property unused as "open space"), the State and the congressional delegation, FEMA refused to lift the restrictions, citing precedent and opposition to a casino which was only one aspect of the new riverfront development.

The community, Lemay, was imperiled and the federal government refused to respond to its pleas for help. Chris Bohanon, VNF Senior Director of Governmental Affairs, led a team that sought, and achieved, passage of the needed legislation. The bill would not have been enacted without Chris's careful guidance and hard advocacy on the Hill, which achieved a significant legislative victory less than three months into the new Congress.

To make the accomplishment even more significant, this marked the second time in 18 months that Chris worked with the Missouri delegation to enact new legislation to rebuild the area. The first Act of Congress was a key amendment to the Defense Authorization Act of 2005, which Chris shepherded through by working with his contacts with then-Ranking Member Skelton and others.