



Government doles out \$40M to Liberty

By Hank Rowland – The Brunswick News, Brunswick Georgia

December 17, 2009

“Assistance comes to those who invested in the proposed growth at Ft. Stewart”

It may be only a chunk of what was actually spent, but \$40 million will go a long way in easing the financial pain caused by a renegeing Pentagon, says U.S. Rep. Jack Kingston, R-1. Kingston announced Wednesday that the Department of Defense is making \$40 million in assistance available to investors left out in the cold when the Pentagon decided against posting a fifth brigade at Fort Stewart, the Army base in Liberty County. Kingston had sought \$75 million. The amount awarded represents only about 40 percent of what was spent preparing for the 4,000 soldiers and families that would have made the coast their home beginning in fiscal year 2011. “At the Army’s request, this community spent over \$100 million building roads, housing and infrastructure for the new brigade,” Kingston said. “Then the Army changed its mind.” Kingston serves on the House Appropriations Committee and the subcommittee on Defense. “While this funding doesn’t cover the entire shortfall, it helps offset some of the hardship,” said Kingston, who has been critical of the Pentagon’s change of mind. “Liberty and surrounding counties have been good hosts and partners to the military but in this situation, they’ve lost millions.” The Office of Economic Adjustment, a tentacle of the Defense Department, will administer the funding. The announcement follows a meeting last week with the Defense Department and members of Georgia’s delegation to Congress. It was reiterated during the meeting that Fort Stewart may be in line for one of the brigades that will be brought home from Europe in 2013. Georgia’s two Republicans in the Senate, Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson, also have been asking the Pentagon to do something to mitigate the loss. Both attended the meeting last week with U.S. Army Secretary John McHugh. “Last week, we had a very productive meeting with Secretary McHugh where we discussed several possibilities for future growth opportunities at Fort Stewart and ways to help the local community,” said Chambliss, who serves on Senate Armed Services Committee. “I look forward to continuing our dialogue with him and with the Army to see that all possibilities are fully explored.” Isakson said the \$40 million is the very least the Pentagon could do. “This community relied on the military’s word and worked hard to prepare for the anticipated expansion at Fort Stewart,” Isakson said. “It’s only right for the government to offer assistance.” Hinesville Mayor Jim Thomas has said that \$450 million was spent to build new schools, homes and to expand water services since the community began working to accommodate the brigade in 2007.