

**DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Delta Regional Authority graduates 6 Tennessee leaders  
ready to improve their local communities**

*Delta Leadership Institute builds capacity across the region*

LAKE BARKLEY, Ky. – The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) today celebrates 49 new graduates of the Delta Leadership Institute (DLI) who will collaborate with DRA's leadership team to continue helping create jobs, build communities, and improve lives across the Mississippi River Delta region and the Black Belt of Alabama.

The 49 graduates, including six from Tennessee, have completed the year-long DLI Executive Academy, a training program that brings together business and community leaders from each of the eight states served by DRA to gain the tools, experiences, and networks that will help them enhance economic opportunities in their communities as well as boost our regional economy.

The graduates have participated in seven workshops over the past year to help them understand the economic development needs of the Delta region, and build a collaborative leadership experience that emphasizes a regional approach to growing local economies and creating opportunities for the 10 million residents of the Delta region. DLI fellows learn from local, regional and national experts in infrastructure and transportation, small business and entrepreneurship, workforce training, and other economic development fields, experiencing what is working to boost economies in the Delta region.

"We are incredibly proud of these graduates and thank them for representing Tennessee," Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner Bob Rolfe said. "These individuals have completed an extensive year-long training and are now able to take what they learned back to their communities to make Tennessee a better place to live, work and raise a family."

The six Tennessee graduates represent a diverse group of public and private sector leaders from across industries:

- Jake Bynum, Dresden | County Mayor, Weakley County Government
- Rachel Crickmar, Nashville | Senior Manager, Tennessee Valley Authority
- James Crone, Memphis | Government and Corporate Relations/Comprehensive Solutions, Trane U.S. Inc.
- Maleia Evans, Covington | Executive Director, Covington Chamber of Commerce

- Gwendolyn Gavin, Brownsville | Director, Eagles Nest
- Jai Templeton, Stantonville | Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Agriculture

A full list of the 2016-17 graduates of the DLI Executive Academy can be found [here](#).

Since 2005 DLI's Executive Academy has enhanced the leadership skills, policy knowledge, and networks of community members in the Delta region. After graduation, DLI graduates become members of the Delta Leadership Network, which now includes nearly 500 members who understand the importance of regional collaboration, resource sharing, and innovative thinking.

DLI is a program of the Delta Regional Authority in partnership with three institutions of higher education from within the DRA footprint: The University of Alabama, Arkansas State University-Jonesboro and The University of Louisiana Monroe.

#### **About the Delta Regional Authority**

The Delta Regional Authority is a federal-state partnership created by Congress in 2000 to help create jobs, build communities, and improve lives through strategic investments in economic development in 252 counties and parishes across eight states. To date, the DRA's SEDAP investments, together with its state and local partners, have leveraged nearly \$3.5 billion in public and private investment into local small business owners, entrepreneurs, workers, and infrastructure development projects. These investments have helped create or retain more than 37,000 jobs and provided water and sewer service to more than 66,000 residents since DRA was established. Learn more at [dra.gov](#).

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