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Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Projects benefit more than Spencer

There's long been an invisible line that has tripped up chances to move this region forward economically.

Sometimes it's a county line, sometimes it's a state line. Regardless, anytime leaders in this area have boxed themselves into established political boundaries and tried to hold their ground, success typically hasn't followed.

Two announcements last week give further encouragement that this sort of territorialism is becoming a thing of the past.

It was a big week for Spencer

County, Ind., our immediate neighbors across the Ohio River. First was the news that a Rockport, Ind., entrepreneur plans to break ground this summer on the first phase of a planned 900-acre riverport one mile east of the William H. Natcher Bridge.

Then came news that a Pittsburgh company will break ground this summer on a \$180 million ethanol plant there. When it's finished in 2009, it is expected to produce 100 million gallons of ethanol yearly.

Both these announcements were viewed as positive on the

Kentucky side of the river. That wouldn't always have been the case.

When MidAmerica Terminals is fully developed, it could mean hundreds of jobs for workers in Daviess and Hancock counties, said Tom Utter, executive director of the Lincolnland Economic Development Corp. in Rockport.

There are six riverports within 65 miles of this planned venture, so a new player could certainly be seen as competition. But those who watch the economy closely here wisely had nothing but positive comments about the new

port and recognize it could help the area become an even bigger player in river transportation.

Nick Brake, president of the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corp., said Owensboro and Spencer County are "tied together economically."

"It will be convenient having a port to serve that side of the river. We're interested in their success," Brake said.

Jody Wassmer, president of the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce, said "we have to think regionally — and that means to the north as well."

The ethanol plant will need 34

million bushels of corn a year to produce the alternative fuel, and Utter said the company hopes to buy as much corn as possible in a 50-mile radius.

It's likely to produce 50 full-time jobs, but its impact on corn growers in the region will be substantial. Whether those farmers live in Daviess County or surrounding counties, it should mean more cash in their pockets, which translates into more to spend with the local economy.

Progress comes when people take chances. We all benefit when the lines that cause growth to stumble are erased.