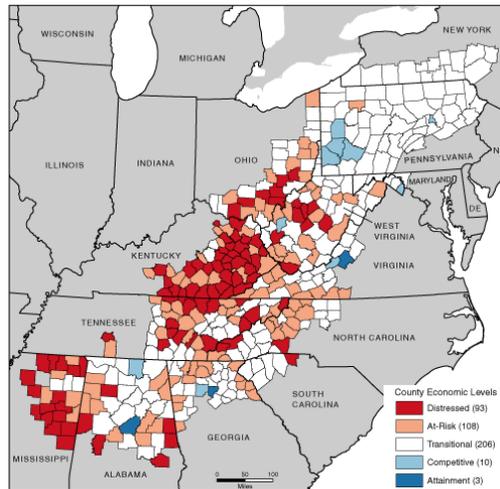


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# KENTUCKY IN THE NEWS

The Kentucky Geographic Alliance – December 2013

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County Economic Status in Appalachia, FY 2014 [ARC.gov](http://ARC.gov)

On Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, Governor Steve Beshear and Representative Hal Rogers spearheaded a summit in Pikeville, Kentucky, called [Shaping Our Appalachia Region](#) (SOAR). The purpose of the conference was to discuss Eastern Kentucky's economic future. The economic downturn in the region is commonly linked to the recent loss of jobs in the coal industry, but the issue has a longer history. President Lyndon B. Johnson (US president from 1963-1969) visited Martin County, KY, and declared a "[war on poverty](#)." As this [interactive map](#) indicates, poverty was widespread across the entire southeast in the 1960s. While poverty has significantly decreased in many areas, including the Appalachian region, poverty still remains a major issue for this region in eastern Kentucky.

Geography plays a large role in this issue in regards to culture, economics, health, topography (any many other linkages). One of many proposals mentioned at the summit was the expansion of infrastructure (projects like the continued development of roads and high-speed internet).

You can link the summit to basic [geo-literacy](#) skills that have been developed to help our students with critical thinking skills. Geo-literacy is about understanding the interaction, the interconnectedness, and the implications that different people in diverse locations have on each other and how this understanding can be used in preparation for decision making. Understanding the **interaction** of natural resources, economics, and culture in eastern Kentucky is the first step for analysis. You can use the [five themes of geography](#) for this step. Once you have selected a topic for analysis, you can see the **interconnections** it has with other places in the world. A great example in the summit was presented by a [representative from the state of Minnesota](#). He addressed the crowd about how Minnesota overcame the downturn in its iron-ore production in the northeastern region. Understanding the **implications** of many of the summit proposals will be key to easing the economic challenges in our Appalachia. One of many proposals that has received recent attention has been the creations of [a tourism center similar to Gatlinburg, TN](#).

Undoubtedly, understanding the economics, culture, and the natural environment of the area will play a key role in developing a sustainable solution to the economic challenges we face in our Appalachia and other regions in the state. Linking the concepts of [geo-literacy](#) will provide an additional set of skills for other challenges that we will face in our future. You can see additional coverage on the [KET](#) and [WKYT](#) websites.