

## **Distributor Announces \$60 Million Expansion in Little Rock**

(AP) Arkansas food distributor Ben E. Keith recently announced plans for a \$60 million expansion that's expected to add 74 new jobs. The new 300,000-square-foot facility will serve as the company's Mid-South Regional headquarters. Mike Roach, the company's president, said he expected construction to begin this summer and take 18 to 20 months to complete. He also said the project will help the company retain 260 existing jobs, which pay an average wage of \$33.75 an hour.

The company said the project was made possible through a \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration. Matt Erskine, EDA's deputy assistant secretary of commerce, said the grant will help North Little Rock purchase generators and other equipment to serve the new facility and surrounding businesses. "This is truly an investment for the future, and an investment that's vital to the continued revitalization of North Little Rock," Erskine said at the news conference.

North Little Rock is putting a grant of \$650,000 toward the project. Beebe said the project is also receiving \$2.27 million from an economic development incentive fund he controls.

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