

For Immediate Release
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NARUC Task Force Issues Recommendations for Improved Broadband Access

WASHINGTON (May 17, 2021) — The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners Broadband Expansion Task Force today released a set of draft recommendations to ensure greater accessibility and coordination to close gaps in broadband service.

The task force, commissioned in 2020 by former NARUC President and Mississippi Commissioner Brandon Presley to elevate the crucial importance of expanding broadband availability throughout the country, consists of U.S. state utility commissioners who are committed to helping solve the broadband availability gap.

Proposed recommendations focus on five areas: broadband mapping, enhancing broadband program coordination, ensuring that broadband providers meet their obligations, supporting non-traditional providers and adopting broadband. Specific action items covered by the recommendations include increasing state commissions' presence and participation in initiatives sponsored by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration; creating legislation to remove barriers to electric and gas utilities' ability to provide broadband service in unserved and underserved areas; and urging the FCC to consider transitioning the temporary Emergency Broadband Benefit Fund into permanent increases in the Lifeline subsidy.

“While task force members understood this need in the pre-COVID world, the importance of universal broadband has been emphasized repeatedly over this past year as an integral part of working remotely, receiving education at home, accessing medical professionals through telehealth applications and participating in an increasingly prevalent remote purchaser economy,” said task force chairman Chris Nelson, who also chairs the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission. “Our work is meant to give state utility commissioners tools to hasten broadband availability for everyone in this country.”

The task force will hold an open virtual meeting at 2 p.m. Eastern Time on June 2 to take stakeholder testimony regarding the draft recommendations. Information on the meeting and preregistration to provide testimony is available at <https://bit.ly/33Lr3GO>. A complete report, along with finalized recommendations, will be presented by the Broadband Expansion Task Force at the NARUC Summer Policy Summit in July. The draft recommendations are available at <https://bit.ly/33KqeO9>.

Complete URL:

Open Meeting & Draft Recommendations, <https://www.naruc.org/committees/committee-resources/taskforce-on-broadband-expansion-resources/meetings/>

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About NARUC

NARUC is a non-profit organization founded in 1889 whose members include the governmental agencies that are engaged in the regulation of utilities and carriers in the fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. NARUC's member agencies regulate telecommunications, energy, and water utilities. NARUC represents the interests of state public utility commissions before the three branches of the federal government.