



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Presiding Commissioner seeks collaboration to bridge digital divide

As part of his ongoing work with the National Association of Counties broadband taskforce, Greene County Presiding Commissioner Bob Dixon is meeting with city and county officials throughout the region to identify roadblocks to reliable broadband in southwest Missouri communities.

Since being appointed to the taskforce in November of last year, Dixon has coordinated and facilitated roundtable discussions in McDonald and Newton counties that included school leaders, law enforcement, fire officials and healthcare leaders. **The next broadband meeting is scheduled in Christian County. It will be held at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 3 at Nixa City Hall, 715 W. Mt. Vernon Street.**

"These roundtables are proving invaluable in helping to pinpoint the gaps in coverage and they provide an opportunity to work together for solutions to improve access to this important resource," Dixon said.

Christian County Presiding Commissioner Ralph Phillips echoed that sentiment.

"We have long known how important broadband access is for our communities and COVID has brought the issue to an even greater light," Phillips said. "These meetings are a way for us to collaborate and address the challenges for the greater benefit."

According to NACo, high-speed internet is consistently identified as a top challenge facing small businesses in rural areas. It often stifles entrepreneurship by limiting the ability of individuals to take on independent work. A lack of reliable broadband is also a major barrier to socioeconomic opportunity, education, health and overall quality of life. A 2018

study conducted by Microsoft concluded that 19 million rural Americans do not use broadband, largely due to a lack of access.

In addition, local governments often face state-imposed limitations to expanding access to broadband connectivity. In 22 states, local governments are restricted from making investments in broadband infrastructure networks. NACo is working to pass federal legislation that would remove those barriers and expand broadband access.

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Greene County is the State of Missouri's fourth most populous county, serving more than 275,000 people (2010 census). Its mission is to provide all citizens of Greene County, including those in its cities, a safe and thriving community through excellent customer service, unparalleled dedication, and the efficient use of taxpayer dollars. The Greene County Commission is the executive body of Greene County operating under guidelines established in the Revised Statutes of the State of Missouri. Within that authority the Commission enacts ordinances, resolutions and policies, supervises the activities of county departments, fixes salaries, adopts the annual budget, provides for construction and other services, and conducts hearings on planning and zoning matters.

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