

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Governor Ricketts Announces Rural Broadband Task Force Members

**JULY 30, 2018 (LINCOLN, NEB.)** — Governor Ricketts has announced representatives of the Rural Broadband Task Force. The task force will review issues related to availability, adoption, and affordability of broadband services in rural areas of Nebraska and make recommendations to the Legislature.

“While Nebraska has rightly earned a reputation as the Silicon Prairie, we have more work to do to ensure that every part of the state has access to broadband to grow businesses, support smart farming, and to improve access to health care and educational opportunities,” said Governor Pete Ricketts. “The recommendations of the Rural Broadband Task Force will help improve broadband availability across the state.”

Governor Ricketts has appointed the following members to the task force:

- **Andrew Buker**, Omaha, Executive Director of Infrastructure Services, Information Technology Services, University of Nebraska (representing Nebraska postsecondary educational institutions)
- **Ron Cone**, Kearney, Director of Network Information Services, ESU 10 (representing rural schools offering kindergarten through grade twelve)
- **Isaiah Graham**, St. Paul, Vice President, Homestead Bank (representing the Nebraska business community)
- **Zachary Hunnicutt**, Giltner, corn, popcorn, and soybean farmer, Hunnicutt Farms (representing agribusiness)
- **Timothy Lindahl**, Sidney, CEO/General Manager, Wheat Belt Public Power District (representing the public power industry)
- **Tom Shoemaker**, Cambridge, President, Pinpoint Communications, Inc. (representing the regulated wireline telecommunications industry)
- **Daniel Spray**, Norfolk, Owner, Precision Technology, Inc. (representing the wireless telecommunications industry)
- **Anna Turman**, Hay Springs, CEO, Chadron Community Hospital and Health Services (representing health care providers)

Other members of the 14-member task force include **Ed Toner**, Chief Information Officer for the State of Nebraska and Chair of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission, who will act as Chair of the Rural Broadband Task Force; **Mary Ridder**, Chair, Nebraska Public Service Commission; **Dave Rippe**, Director, Nebraska Department of Economic Development; **Steve Wellman**, Director, Nebraska Department of Agriculture; **Senator Curt Friesen**, District 34, Chair, Transportation and Telecommunications Committee, Nebraska Legislature; and **Senator Bruce Bostelman**, District 23, Nebraska Legislature.

“With broadband available to 89% of Nebraskans, but only 66% of rural Nebraskans, Nebraska is facing a rural-urban digital divide,” said Toner. “I welcome the opportunity to work with key stakeholders on the Rural Broadband Task Force to improve broadband availability in Nebraska.”

The task force was created by LB 994, which was passed 48-0-1 by the Legislature and signed by Governor Ricketts on April 17. The bill was introduced by Senator Curt Friesen, chair of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. The task force will submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Legislature by Nov. 1, 2019.

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### Additional Resources:

<https://governor.nebraska.gov/press/governor-ricketts-announces-rural-broadband-task-force-members>

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