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NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION  
FROM THE OFFICE OF DISTRICT 5 COMMISSIONER SANDY JONES

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***PRC approves 23 broadband projects linking rural New Mexico to the world***

**SANTA FE, NM** – The Public Regulation Commission (PRC) today approved 23 projects which will deliver broadband internet service to nearly 33,000 New Mexicans living in unserved and underserved communities across the state.

Four companies – Smith Bagley, Inc., dba Cellular One of North East Arizona (“SBI”); Valor Telecommunications of Texas, LLC dba Windstream Communications Southwest (“Windstream”); E.N.M.R. Telephone Cooperative (“ENMR”); and CenturyLink QC (“CenturyLink”) – will share a \$5 million appropriation from the State Rural Universal Service Fund (SRUSF), which supplements the cost of telephone and broadband internet infrastructure in low income and rural cities and towns.

The Rural Telecommunications Act of New Mexico provides that, each year, the commission shall dedicate \$5 million of the SRUSF to the broadband program.

“I am very pleased that the state fund is working to help rural New Mexicans connect to the world and access essentials such as education, business opportunities, and medical care,” said Commissioner Cynthia B. Hall, District 1.

“The broadband program is vital for internet equality in New Mexico and will empower rural communities to thrive, inspire children to succeed, and give small businesses a competitive edge,” said Commissioner Patrick H. Lyons, District 2.

“I’m pleased to see that students of all ages and the communities they live in will soon be able to compete on a global level,” said Commissioner Valerie Espinoza, District 3. “But, we are holding the applicants accountable; they must use their respective appropriations for what they are intended and complete their projects on schedule. I expect frequent progress reports from officers of each company.”

“Two years ago, this commission made a commitment to solve the rural broadband digital divide and these projects offer a glimmer of hope in our efforts to wire our rural communities,” said Commissioner Lynda Lovejoy, District 4. “It’s the next generation of technologies – green energy, smart cities, and sustainable agriculture and farming designed to boost production of healthy foods – that is needed to compete locally and economically.”

“Today’s vote is significant because we are going to get internet service to people who have never had it,” said Chairman Sandy Jones, District 5. “This is a direct result of industry, the legislator, and the regulator working together and I appreciate everyone whose deep commitment will now improve the quality of life in every corner of the state.”