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# NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

FROM THE OFFICE OF DISTRICT 5 COMMISSIONER SANDY JONES

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

## **CenturyLink Accepts Federal Connect America Funds for Rural New Mexico Customers**

**SANTA FE** – On Thursday morning, August 27, CenturyLink announced that the company has notified the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) of its acceptance of the state-level offer of Connect America Fund Phase II (CAF II) support for New Mexico in the amount of \$10.9 million annually over a six-year period.

CenturyLink will utilize CAF II funds to supplement their own capital investment and operating expense funding to provide access to broadband service for more than 25,000 residential and commercial customers in FCC-designated rural census blocks across the company's New Mexico service area. CenturyLink states they plan to accomplish this through a six-year build out plan of broadband service capable of at least 10 Megabytes per second (Mbps) downstream and 1 Mbps upstream for these customers.

This coincides with New Mexico Public Regulation Commissioner Sandy Jones' drive to expand broadband service to unserved and underserved rural regions throughout the state through the implementation of a broadband task force.

The joint commitment bridging the rural broadband divide nationwide as well as within New Mexico will serve to drive the enhanced economic development while fostering distance learning, enhancing telemedicine applications, enabling telecommuting opportunities and augmenting public safety capabilities.

"I am very pleased with CenturyLink's decision to accept the \$66 million in CAF II funds for New Mexico," Commissioner Jones stated. "There is nearly universal agreement within the business community that the availability of broadband has become far more important to rural economic development than plain old telephone service. The Commission has been exploring the development of a state broadband fund. If properly structured and approved by the Commission, a state broadband fund, when combined with CenturyLink's CAF II support, would finally make it economically feasible to expand broadband into the many high-cost, sparsely populated areas of the state, many of which have no access to the Internet at all. The economic, educational and other benefits of extending broadband service to those areas can't be overstated."

District 5 Commissioner Jones spearheaded the launch of the NMPRC's broadband task force earlier this year.

CenturyLink anticipates the start of construction will begin no later than early 2016 – once their initial build out plan is finalized. The company announced that the NMPRC will receive annual updates on CenturyLink's build out progress.

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