

Broadband Summit – As Prepared for Delivery

Lt. Governor Findley

October 25, 2010

It's a pleasure to be here today for the Kansas Broadband Summit, a first-of-its kind gathering of industry, government, education and civic leaders to discuss the state's current broadband Internet landscape; and develop a strategy to move us toward universal statewide access and adoption.

First, I want to thank you all for your support of the initiative so far. But more than that, I want to thank you in advance for the role you and your organizations are going to play in the coming months and years. Whether you're an Internet service provider; a community college or technical school; a public library; a hospital or medical provider; a government agency; a business owner; or an entrepreneur, you're almost certainly going to be involved in the expansion of broadband access and adoption in Kansas.

Each individual and organization represented at the Summit today is crucial to our efforts to grow the Kansas economy and improve our quality of life through increased broadband Internet adoption in Kansas. And for that, we thank you.

We're all concerned about the strength of our state's economy – whether it's the closing of storefronts downtown, the laying off of workers at the local assembly line, or the cut backs in local government services – this recession is being felt across the board.

But Governor Parkinson and I have been committed to putting forth job producing policies, preventing layoffs and furthering our economic recovery.

By working with a bipartisan coalition in the legislature, we were able to pass a balanced budget this year – not something many other states have been able to do. Our unemployment rate remains one of the lowest in the country at 6.6%. And through our investments to education and to strong sectors of our economy, Kansas continues to be recognized as one of the top 10 states in the country for business.

Because Governor Parkinson and I realized that the question isn't "*will* we come out of this recession?" but "*how*?"

The goal of our administration has been to do everything we can to position Kansas to come out of this recession stronger than ever before. That's where expanding broadband Internet across Kansas comes in.

During these challenging economic times, I'm not sure our state would have been able to take on such a venture without the assistance of the federal government.

Through the Recovery Act, Kansas is implementing resources to improve our infrastructure – and not just through roads or railway, but also for the World Wide Web. As many of you know, the Recovery Act committed \$7.2 billion to increase broadband access and adoption nationwide.

Sometimes, there's a tendency to think about Recovery Act projects in terms of dollars spent and percentages calculated. In other words, we forget to put a human face on what these projects are doing.

So what does enhanced broadband access mean to rural Kansas citizens?

From a business standpoint, it means increased opportunities for entrepreneurship and new small-business development. How many entrepreneurs out there have the next big-idea, but have no way to share it? No way to expand it? Soon they can.

It also means increased efficiency and collaboration in the workplace. Kansas is a manufacturing state, and that also makes us a supplier state. Manufacturers need to be able to communicate quickly and consistently with their suppliers. High speed internet can make this possible.

From a service standpoint, it means enhanced access to government services, documents and records. Kansans will go from having their government be a day's drive away, to merely a click-away. Kansans can also experience improved "telemedicine," including online medical consultations and the sharing medical records, which is crucial for citizens who don't have medical facilities in their area.

From a workforce development standpoint, it means increased opportunities for online degree programs, certification and training.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, enhanced broadband access means sustainable communities. It improves a community's chances of recruiting and retaining companies, as well as younger Kansans to stay in their home town to start a business or raise a family. It allows a community to market itself as a travel and tourism destination.

So, that's why the work you all are here doing here this few days is so important – for the small business that wants expand their consumers; for the senior that wants to get quick advice from their doctor; for the working mother that wants to further her education and employment opportunities.

Remember that your work is for them, and when you succeed, our entire state succeeds.

I'd like to take a brief moment to summarize the past year's worth of broadband activity in Kansas and remind you where we're going from here.

In an effort to access the \$7.2 billion from the Recovery Act slated for our state, I was glad to join the Department of Commerce to help launch the Connect Kansas initiative last December.

So far, Connect Kansas has helped nine Kansas companies and organizations win a combined \$137 million in federal grants and loans for broadband expansion projects.

In addition, Connect Kansas has been awarded an additional \$6.4 million for statewide mapping, data collection, planning and outreach. Let me give you some concrete examples of what that means and exactly what that \$6.4 million is doing.

First, we've spent the past year collecting data on existing broadband capacity in Kansas and rolling those data into the interactive map that was unveiled here yesterday afternoon. This online tool will

allow all Kansans to research broadband connectivity in their area, making it an incredibly powerful tool for business and industry leaders, government officials, policymakers and consumers. Those of you saw it demo'ed yesterday know it's really, really cool.

Second, Governor Parkinson assembled the Kansas Broadband Advisory Task Force — a group of industry and policy leaders who will help develop the state's long-term broadband strategy — and named Brad Williams and Randall Allen as chair and vice-chair. This group has already met twice, and the meetings have been incredibly productive. If you have time today, I'd encourage you to introduce yourself and your organization to the Task Force members in the room.

Third, moving forward, we'll be creating regional technology planning teams to develop localized broadband plans; support various broadband initiatives, strategies and planning activities statewide; and commit additional staff to the broadband initiative.

These are just three examples of the many components that comprise our broadband effort. So when you look at all these activities — statewide mapping and data collection, the creation of the Task Force, and related planning and outreach — Kansas is clearly off to a great start in our mission to achieve universal statewide adoption and access.

Before I sign off, I want to thank Kansas Broadband Manager Stan Adams and his colleagues at the Kansas Department of Commerce for organizing this Summit and continuing to drive this Connect Kansas initiative on behalf of the state.

And of course, I want to thank all of you in the room today, as you will all be playing a huge role in driving the broadband initiative. Your work will go a long way in improving the quality-of-life for so many Kansans, and I'm very excited to see all of us working together to bring the state up-to-speed for the 21st Century.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I look forward to working with you all to make universal broadband Internet access a reality in Kansas. ///