



Office of the Governor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Lujan Grisham signs measures advancing broadband connection and development

SANTA FE – Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham on Wednesday signed a pair of measures moving the state one step closer to providing New Mexico with the broadband capacity to connect all New Mexicans to reliable, high-speed internet.

Senate Bill 93 establishes an Office of Broadband Access and Expansion to centralize and coordinate broadband activities across state government agencies, local governmental bodies, tribal governmental organizations and internet service providers. The Office of Broadband will be responsible for developing a three-year broadband strategic and operational plan providing guiding principles and operational criteria for significant broadband deployment and expansion for New Mexico.

House Bill 10 establishes the Connect New Mexico Fund and the Connect New Mexico Council, which will provide state grant funding for broadband infrastructure statewide and conduct and enact oversight and accountability requirements; the legislation also significantly increases the annual distribution for broadband infrastructure from the State Rural Universal Service Fund.

The broadband office will conduct statewide meetings for the purpose of gathering recommendations and feedback on how to best move forward with existing stakeholder plans for broadband expansion for all New Mexicans.

The Connect New Mexico Council will consist of 15 members who will oversee \$130 million in broadband grant and infrastructure appropriations made in the 2021 session.

Sponsors of the two measures included Sen. Michael Padilla, Sen. Liz Stefanics, Rep. Natalie Figueroa, Rep. Joy Garratt, Rep. Susan Herrera, Rep. Candie Sweetser and Rep. Christine Chandler.

“The pandemic has underscored the urgent need for reliable internet access for every single student and family and business,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “We must and we will provide every New Mexican with quality and affordable broadband service, and these measures advance the subject.”

“Today marks a giant step forward for New Mexico,” said Sen. Michael Padilla. “The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion will help centralize and coordinate our efforts to build out a broadband infrastructure that will bring economic development, distance learning and telehealth delivery across the state, including some of the hardest to reach areas. And, this office could help generate close to a billion dollars in federal funding for New Mexico – critical dollars that will go toward ensuring comprehensive coverage and the best use of the latest technologies. Thank you Governor Lujan Grisham for signing this important legislation.”

“A centralized and focused effort to deliver broadband across New Mexico will be an economic driver for business owners, remote workers, and companies looking to relocate to New Mexico and invest in new technologies,” said Economic Development Secretary Alicia J. Keyes.

“The digital divide is nothing new, but the pandemic made it clear that closing it must be a priority for New Mexico if we're going to honor our commitment to provide every child with a full and equitable education,” said Public Education Secretary Ryan Stewart. “Through public-private partnerships, we narrowed the divide considerably this year by getting many school children the access they needed to digital devices and high-speed internet. With this legislation, we're on the path to close that divide once and for all.”

“The pandemic exposed the tremendous need for communications infrastructure in our rural and tribal communities,” said Indian Affairs Secretary Lynn Trujillo. “Broadband access will help our students succeed, local businesses thrive, and will ensure vital information reaches every citizen in our state.”

“I look forward to working closely with the council members in formulating a broadband framework plan that encompasses strategic planning, program oversight, and grant award methodologies,” said Information and Technology Secretary John Salazar. “Many members of the legislature on both sides of the aisle worked diligently over the past year to understand the challenges we face in bringing broadband to New Mexico and ensure passage of this much-needed legislation. We look forward to working with them and stakeholders from a wide range of communities in the months ahead to ensure every New Mexican can get the reliable and affordable internet access they need and deserve.”

The governor on Wednesday also signed Senate Bill 204, sponsored by Sen. Michael Padilla, to provide access to the State Rural Universal Services Fund to Sacred Wind Communications, which delivers broadband access to the Navajo Nation and surrounding areas.

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