

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS**

March 22, 2022

8:07 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Chair  
Representative Dan Ortiz  
Representative Zack Fields  
Representative Geran Tarr  
Representative Mike Cronk

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION: BROADBAND IN RURAL ALASKA

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

ANDY BURKE, Special Representative  
Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and  
Information Administration  
Washington D.C.

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled  
"Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act New Funding  
Initiatives," during the Presentation on Broadband in Rural  
Alaska.

HALLIE BISSETT, Executive Director  
Alaska Native Village Corporation Association  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation,  
titled "Governor's Task Force on Broadband," during the  
Presentation on Broadband in Rural Alaska.

CHRISTINE O'CONNOR, Executive Director  
Alaska Telecom Association

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Governor's Task Force on Broadband," during the Presentation on Broadband in Rural Alaska.

CHRISTINA SALMON-BRINGHURST, Board Member  
Igiugig Village Council  
Igiugig, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Southwest Alaska Long-haul Microwave and Optical Network," during the Presentation on Broadband in Rural Alaska.

KARL HILL, Vice President  
Igiugig Village Council  
Igiugig, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Southwest Alaska Long-haul Microwave and Optical Network," during the Presentation on Broadband in Rural Alaska.

ROBERT HIMSCHOOT, CEO  
Nushagak Cooperative  
Dillingham, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Southwest Alaska Long-haul Microwave and Optical Network," during the Presentation on Broadband in Rural Alaska.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:07:24 AM](#)

**CHAIR TIFFANY ZULKOSKY** called the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting to order at 8:07 a.m. Representatives Zulkosky, Ortiz, Fields, Cronk, and Tarr were present at the call to order.

#### **PRESENTATION: Broadband in Rural Alaska**

[8:08:42 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY announced that the only order of business would be a presentation on Broadband in Rural Alaska.

[8:08:50 AM](#)

ANDY BURKE, Special Representative, Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled

"Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act New Funding Initiatives" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. He discussed President Biden's commitment to providing every American with reliable, affordable broadband, which was realized in the bipartisan infrastructure bill, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The IIJA created \$65 billion in broadband funding with \$42.45 billion going to Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment (BEAD); \$2.75 billion to digital equity programs; \$2 billion to Tribal connectivity; and \$1 billion to enabling middle mile broadband infrastructure. Thus far, NTIA had made 3 \$500,000 grants to Alaska Tribes with more to come. An emphasis was being placed on providing technical assistance to Tribes. In response to committee questions, he confirmed that BEAD and digital equity programs were state administered, while the Tribal connectivity and middle mile funding was deployed directly by NTIA grants. To prevent providers from taking advantage of the funding, the IIJA would require providers to offer a low-cost plan for residents. He characterized the NTIA as "tech agnostic," adding that the organization would fund any tech with a minimum of 100 Mbps upload and 20 Mbps download speed.

[8:39:46 AM](#)

HALLIE BISSETT, Executive Director, Alaska Native Village Corporation Association, co-provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Governor's Task Force on Broadband" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. The Governor's Task Force on Broadband was created by Administrative Order 322 with eight specific tasks and two subgroups: the Technical Subgroup and the Policy Subgroup.

CHRISTINE O'CONNOR, Executive Director, Alaska Telecom Association, co-provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Governor's Task Force on Broadband." She discussed the following recommendations made by the Technical Subgroup: prioritize the unserved and underserved; define gaps in broadband service as less than 100/20 Mbps; identify middle mile needs; give preference to fiber-optic cables; minimize disparity in access to service; and ensure accurate maps. In response to committee questions, she defined the "middle mile" as the connection between communities and the long-haul connection between Seattle and Alaska.

MS. BISSETT shared the following recommendations made by the Policy Subgroup: establish an Office of Broadband Deployment; establish a State Broadband Advisory Board; strengthen Tribal

partnerships; prioritize local workforce development; acknowledge the importance of affordability; and create a broadband parity adjustment.

[9:01:53 AM](#)

CHRISTINA SALMON-BRINGHURST, Board Member, Igiugig Village Council, Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Southwest Alaska Long-haul Microwave and Optical Network" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. The Southwest Alaska Long-haul Microwave and Optical Network (SALMONet) was a high-performance broadband network for Bristol Bay.

KARL HILL, Vice President, Igiugig Village Council, Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Southwest Alaska Long-haul Microwave and Optical Network." The goals for SALMONet were to provide 300/30Mbps unlimited service to 20 communities in Bristol Bay and to provide the same level of service at the same cost to every subscriber. Becoming a rural Alaska internet service provider required the following considerations: local delivery, middle mile delivery of the fiber intent backbone, and direct internet access (DIA) to the Internet Exchange Point in Seattle. Mr. Hill gave an overview of the network topology. Existing regional partnerships would be critical for this project, including NTIA grants to cover the buildout.

ROBERT HIMSCHOOT, CEO, Nushagak Cooperative, in response to committee questions, explained that nothing was set in stone with GCI. Connecting to GCI's network would benefit both systems, so he reasoned that GCI would be interested in the proposal.

MR. HILL continued the presentation by describing what a "good" broadband service looks like, including high data transfer speed and low latency, low contention rate, and unrestricted data throughout. SALMONet would be securing a digital future by responding to many of the Alaska Broadband Taskforce findings: fiber backbone with low latency; urban service equivalency; surpassing current taskforce bandwidth targets; creation of Alaskan training programs and jobs; and a high level of scalability. Furthermore, the training and education opportunities would offer digital equity for the next generation.

[9:35:01 AM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.