



May 24, 2024



Tell Your Story: NTCA would like to thank the more than 360 attendees of the 2024 Marketing + Sales Conference in Scottsdale, Ariz. It was a great event highlighting many new trends in broadband marketing and storytelling.

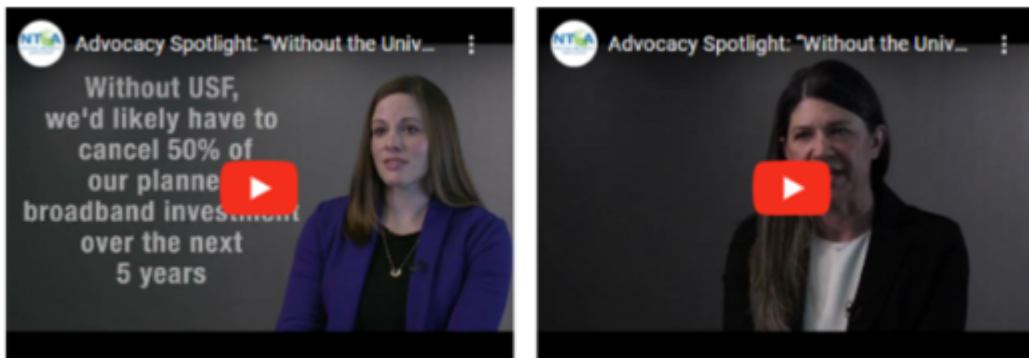
NTCA Shares Concerns with BEAD Implementation Efforts

NTCA CEO Shirley Bloomfield **sent a letter** to National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Administrator Alan Davidson outlining concerns with the development and implementation of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program.

The letter addresses NTCA members' concerns about the size of project service areas, noting that if they are drawn too widely – such as across entire rural counties that may span hundreds of square miles or more – it could preclude smaller providers from “edging out” and leveraging existing network assets, as well as disadvantaging fiber projects. The letter also discusses the importance of structuring an effective BEAD low-cost option in a manner that would enable sustainable business plans.

Bloomfield also wrote of concerns about the impact of excessive weighting on the provision of matching funds in BEAD scoring. If state scoring rules favor applicants who can supply more matching funds, this could lead to a “race to the bottom” comparable to recent universal service reverse auctions. Instead, the letter encourages NTIA to look for guidance to programs like the ReConnect Loan and Grant Program, which considers qualitative measures over simple prioritization of the lowest bidder. Finally, the letter expresses concern over the state of the National Broadband Map. Funding decisions are being made based upon unreliable data, and small providers and other stakeholders are unfairly tasked with addressing chronic and systemic issues at the federal and state levels. Bloomfield encouraged NTIA to work with the FCC to develop reliable maps and consider enforcement measures in the case of chronic overreporting of coverage, and to ensure the states are empowered to make the corrections needed to more accurately reflect conditions on the ground.

[READ THE LETTER](#)



Advocacy Spotlight: ‘Without the Universal Service Fund, Consumers Will Pay More’

NTCA members are united in their efforts to achieve and sustain universal service. Over the next several weeks, the association will showcase videos from members across the country talking about why the federal Universal Service Fund (USF) and better broadband maps are important to ensuring rural communities and consumers can continue to thrive.

This week, [Jennifer Prather](#), CEO of Totelcom Communications, LLC. (De Leon, Texas), and [Catherine Moyer](#), CEO of Pioneer Communications (Ulysses, Kan.), talked about what universal service means to their

companies and communities and [wrote about the importance of a sustainable and predictable USF](#).

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NTCA, RLEC Stakeholders Raise Practical and Legal Concerns with FCC NG911 Proposal

NTCA and a group of rural local exchange carriers (RLECs) this week proposed changes to draft FCC rules seeking to promote a transition to Next Generation 911 in meetings with staff to [Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel](#) and Commissioners [Nathan Simington](#) and [Geoffrey Starks](#).

In each meeting, NTCA and the RLEC parties noted that their proposal would be consistent with facts established in the record, the underlying law, and long-standing interconnection rules and practices. The discussions come as part of NTCA's response to a [FCC Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) meant to advance the transition to NG911. NTCA has long supported this transition as rural consumers will benefit from the transmission of text, photos, videos and data as part of 911 calls, yet the association also has sought to ensure that the costs of this are not disproportionately placed upon rural consumers. Previously, the association and industry partners [proposed alternative cost allocation rules](#) to avoid such increases and [met](#) with the FCC's Public Safety Bureau.



FRS Announces James L. Bass Legal Scholarship Recipient

The Foundation for Rural Service announced it awarded the James L. Bass Legal Scholarship to Morgan Fritz. NTCA member Winnebago Cooperative Telecom Association (Lake

Mills, Iowa) CEO Mark Thoma surprised her with the award announcement.

Fritz, an Iowa State University graduate and former student body president, will attend Yale Law School in this fall. She currently works as a special assistant to the lieutenant governor of Iowa. In her role, she has worked on the Empower Rural Iowa Initiative and assisted in the development and administration of Iowa United First Aid, a state program that aims to decrease emergency medical service response times in rural areas.

The James L. Bass Legal Scholarship was created by the NTCA Board of Directors and many generous donors in recognition of Bass's impact on the industry and his passion for the legal profession. It is awarded annually to a student interested in rural communities entering his or her first year of law school.



The Journey of the Intrepid'ish Travelers, Round 2

In the continued spirit of celebrating my husband, who, despite all of those years of joking that he would never make it to retirement age given some earlier health challenges he went through, is likely healthier and more active than ever, I wanted to share how we prioritize ways to see the world while

also recognizing life milestones. Don's upcoming milestone is his retirement after 40-some years of practicing law. That alone sounds exhausting and worthy of celebration, but when coupled with news that our youngest daughter, Kelsey, is getting married this fall, we went for a "two-fer" celebration of retirement and pre-wedding time together.

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In [joint comments](#) filed with the FCC, NTCA and ACA Connects supported the commission's proposal to allow Emergency Alert System participants to issue alerts for missing and endangered persons voluntarily.

The House Committee on Agriculture [marked up](#) the Farm, Food and National Security Act of 2024 (Farm Bill). The House Energy and Commerce Committee's Innovation, Data and Commerce Subcommittee [marked up](#) the American Privacy Rights Act.

Petitioners arguing against the constitutionality of the Universal Service Fund [filed a reply brief](#) with the Supreme Court saying that a review of the program is necessary.

The FCC released a [tentative agenda](#) for its June 6 meeting, including the consideration of a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on changes letter of credit requirements for recipients of high-cost support authorized through a competitive process.

The deadline to submit applications in response to the [Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Rural eConnectivity \(ReConnect\) Program for Fiscal Year 2024](#) was extended due to issues experienced with the application intake system. All applications must now be submitted through the Rural Utilities Service online application portal by 11:59 a.m. ET on May 28, 2024.

Outreach

NTCA CEO **Shirley Bloomfield** joined the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association at its 114th Annual Convention in Lake Geneva, Wis., to discuss what it will take to bridge the digital divide. **Bloomfield** also discussed efforts to close the digital divide in a fireside chat at Network X Americas in Las Colinas, Texas.

NTCA Executive Vice President **Mike Romano** gave an industry update at the Kentucky Rural Broadband Association Annual Meeting in Lexington, Ky.

NTCA Vice President of Policy and Industry Innovation **Josh Seidemann** discussed ways to build board support for cybersecurity programming on a panel at the Iowa Communications Alliance CyberCon in Des Moines.

FRS Executive Director **Pam Becker** and **Seidemann** discussed the importance of building broadband in rural communities on a webinar with the Texas Economic Development Council.

NTCA Director of Government Affairs **Brendan Dailey** gave a federal update at the Alaska Telecom Association Annual Meeting in Sitka, Alaska.

NTCA Vice President of Strategic Communications **Laura Withers** presented ideas for community engagement and development and updates on the association's Smart Communities program at the Texas Telephone Association's Spring Training Conference in Austin.

UPCOMING WEBINARS

Keeping you connected to the latest information for broadband providers.



**Policy Talk: Mapping, Universal Service and BEAD
Implementation**

Thursday, June 13 | 1 p.m. ET

Join NTCA CEO Shirley Bloomfield and Executive Vice President Mike Romano for a discussion about the association's ongoing advocacy efforts to correct data in the FCC's National Broadband Map, protect and sustain the Universal Service Fund and improve implementation plans for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program.

[REGISTER](#)

Smart Rural Communities: Continuing the Conversation

Tuesday, June 18 | 2 p.m. ET

Following a successful Smart Communities in Conversation event in Washington, D.C., join NTCA's Smart Communities program for an interactive webinar to continue the conversation. Hear updates on the latest program resources and how to use Smart Rural Community branding and share examples of initiatives you have implemented in your own communities.

[REGISTER](#)



On Memorial Day, NTCA remembers and honors the generations of men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our nation.



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