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Kathleen Sebelius, Governor
David D. Kerr, Secretary
KansasCommerce.com

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The Honorable Gary Locke
Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Anna Gomez
Acting Assistant Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Communications & Information
Office of the Assistant Secretary
National Telecommunications Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
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Secretary Locke, Secretary Vilsack and Assistant Secretary Gomez:

The Kansas Department of Commerce strongly encourages the National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) and the Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Services (RUS) to work closely with states to ensure the dramatic funding increases provided to their programs through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) are spent efficiently and effectively to provide more Americans with access to broadband technology.

The ARRA relies heavily on states and existing federal-state programs to quickly spend funds, create jobs and spur economic growth. A portion of ARRA funds are dedicated to prudent investments in our nation's infrastructure including increased deployment and availability of broadband technology. Specifically, the ARRA provides \$4.7 billion to NTIA for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) and \$2.5 billion to RUS for its grants and loan

programs. NTIA and RUS have indicated they intend to release these funds in three stages, with the first stage in early fall 2009, followed by two more in 2010.

To meet the goals the ARRA calls on NTIA to consult with states to help identify unserved and underserved areas and provide input regarding the allocation of grant funds for projects in or affecting the states. I strongly encourage your consideration of the following recommendations:

- **Work through representative of the states to coordinate broadband investments**

With over \$230 billion going to or through states under the ARRA, the states have taken the lead in implementing recovery efforts within their states. In most cases, individuals or appointed task forces have been designated to ensure that ARRA funds are spent efficiently, jobs are created and all activities are conducted with an eye towards accountability and transparency.

The states are in the best position to take into account the unique geographic, economic and demographic factors of their states. They are also best positioned to leverage cross-agency resources to maximize the economic development and employment opportunities of particular investments and coordinate the requests of local governments and the private sector.

- **Require state-wide broadband inventory assessments and fund the development of strategic broadband plans**

I urge NTIA and RUS to expedite funding for state-wide broadband inventory mapping and provide funds for states to develop strategic state broadband.

- a. Mapping

ARRA provides up to \$350 million to implement the Broadband Data Improvement Act (Pub. L. No. 110-385) to develop and maintain a broadband inventory map. It is recommended these funds be made available to all states as soon as possible to initiate, complete or improve broadband inventory mapping efforts. Mapping is essential for identifying underserved and unserved areas and developing strategies for deploying broadband in a cost-effective and comprehensive manner. By providing mapping funds immediately, NTIA can help states improve existing efforts or initiate mapping programs to inform state broadband plans.

- b. Strategic broadband plans

NTIA also should offer states small, flexible funding grants to conduct strategic planning and priority-setting on broadband deployment. States could use the grant for comprehensive planning and priority setting purposes to either develop a new statewide broadband plan or revise an existing plan. Funds could also be used to help identify stakeholders and partners, assess needs, review grant applications and engage in post-grant monitoring. The grant should be a one-time award to each state and not count against the ARRA's requirement that a state receive at least one grant under the program.

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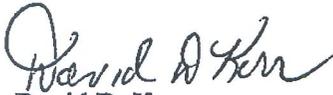
Page 3

- **State Review**

A state should play a direct role in evaluating grantee applications to ensure proposed projects are consistent with the state plan. Using a state-based system, each state would review all applications for in-state projects based on NTIA/RUS criteria and their consistency with the state's strategic broadband guidelines or plan. The state would then submit its recommendations to NTIA and RUS for final funding decisions as required by ARRA.

States are positioned to serve an invaluable role in implementing the ARRA's broadband objectives. Using dedicated funds to develop broadband inventory maps and a small portion of available funds to establish state broadband strategies will help ensure federal and state investments are targeted and effective. The state of Kansas look forward to working closely with NTIA and RUS deploy ARRA funds in a meaningful way that maximizes job growth and provides more Americans with access to broadband technology.

Sincerely,



David D. Kerr

Secretary