



Press Release

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RCRC Approves Formation of a Joint Powers Authority to Advance Rural Broadband Development

SACRAMENTO, CA – The Board of Directors of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) have authorized formation of the Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA), a joint powers authority, to advance rural broadband development. GSCA will be governed by elected Supervisors from rural counties that choose to join. The objective of GSCA is to increase access to reliable, affordable high-speed broadband for all rural Californians.

Access to broadband is an increasingly essential resource for educational opportunity, health care access, economic growth, and civic engagement. Despite the importance of broadband, access remains uneven throughout the state. [A 2020 report](#) by the California Public Utilities Commission found 51.3% of rural households did not have access to high-speed broadband, defined as download speeds of 100 Mbps.

Over the last five years RCRC, a thirty-seven-member county service organization, has increased its advocacy efforts in promoting policies that close the digital divide and bring reliable, high-speed broadband access to rural areas of the state. In July 2021 Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 156, establishing a landmark \$6 billion investment in broadband infrastructure, representing a significant step in bridging the digital divide. The enactment of Senate Bill 156 has introduced new opportunities to expand RCRC's efforts significantly, including explicit authority for county entities to operate broadband systems, the creation of a state-owned, open-access middle mile network, and establishment of innovative programs to fund broadband deployment in unserved and underserved areas of the state.

To best take advantage of these opportunities, RCRC has initiated the formation of GSCA to leverage collective efforts on behalf of rural counties in the provision of technical assistance and the establishment of broadband infrastructure in under connected areas. GSCA will assist rural counties in

identifying pathways for development of broadband infrastructure within their communities, including the construction of municipal owned and/or operated broadband systems, among other options. Specifically, it is intended that GSCA will pursue initiatives to:

- Expand broadband in rural counties through the pursuit of technical assistance and funding for member counties; and,
- Install and operate open-access, municipal broadband infrastructure, starting with select initial locations and then expanding to additional project areas.

“Thanks to Senate Bill 156, local governments now have the funding and power to advance broadband development throughout California,” said Mono County Supervisor and RCRC Board Chair Stacy Corless. “Golden State Connect Authority seeks to leverage the opportunities provided by the legislation. Through this new entity, we can collectively pursue resources and target efforts to close the digital divide in rural counties, thereby enhancing economic development and the quality of life in underserved communities.”

All RCRC member counties are eligible to join GSCA through the approval of their county Board of Supervisors and have been notified directly by RCRC regarding the opportunity. GSCA will be governed by an elected Supervisor from each member county, and day-to-day operations will be managed by RCRC staff. Additional informational regarding GSCA is available at www.goldenstateconnect.org and will continue to be updated as efforts advance.

ABOUT RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES OF CALIFORNIA (RCRC)

The Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) is a thirty-seven member county strong service organization that champions policies on behalf of California’s rural counties. RCRC is dedicated to representing the collective unique interests of its membership, providing legislative and regulatory representation at the State and Federal levels, and providing responsible services for its members to enhance and protect the quality of life in rural California counties. To learn more about RCRC, visit rcrcnet.org and follow @RuralCounties on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

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