



ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

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(Phoenix) The Arizona Corporation Commission will hold an all day workshop Thursday, March 2nd at 11:00 a.m. to explore amending rules to the Arizona Universal Service Fund (AUSF) in order to provide funding for an innovative program to connect Arizona's rural schools to the Internet.

The proposal partners the Corporation Commission with the Governor's Office, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the non-profit *EducationSuperHighway*. The AUSF would be used to create state matching funds that draw additional Federal Education Rate (E-Rate) funding. The current estimate of Arizona's contribution is \$8-\$13 million. The program would be limited to take advantage of immediate federal funding opportunities available and would be eliminated after the funds have been dispersed to schools and libraries. This is the second of two workshops where stakeholders will offer presentations and discussions to making the program possible. The first workshop was held in January.

"The time to act is now," said Commissioner Andy Tobin. "We have limited time to ensure these funds can be allocated for the schools in most need. I am very pleased with the work that was done in the previous workshop and look forward to completing the work ahead. The rural students deserve the same opportunities as students in urban areas where broadband is more accessible."

"This program will give more rural residents better access to internet services and health care through Arizona's nationally recognized telemedicine program (www.telemedicine.arizona.edu) which includes an educational program teaching pre-med classes to grades 7 through 12." said Commissioner Bob Burns.

Approximately 250,000 students in the state of Arizona lack sufficient access to internet services. The purpose of the AUSF is to support telecommunications carriers as they build scalable infrastructure to serve students in rural areas of Arizona. The funds are currently collected through a monthly service charges of \$0.01 on a customer's phone bill. The program would increase that surcharge to \$0.15 per month for one year and then would expire.

The workshop will take place in the Commissioner's Conference Room on the 2nd floor of the Arizona Corporation Commission, 1200 W. Washington Street, Phoenix. The workshop will be streamed live also, audio only. Go to www.azcc.gov to listen in.

Established by Article 15 of the state's constitution, the Arizona Corporation Commission is responsible for the regulation of public utilities, overseeing the incorporation or registration of companies wishing to do business in Arizona. Additionally, the Corporation Commission registers and oversees securities offerings and dealers, and enforces railroad and pipeline safety. The five commissioners that make up the Commission are elected by the people of Arizona for a four-year term, with the option of serving for two consecutive terms. To learn more about the Arizona Corporation Commission and the Commissioners, please check out <http://www.azcc.gov/Divisions/Administration/about.asp>

