

Rural Action Caucus Business Meeting

Wednesday, March 10, 1:00 P.M.— 3:00 P.M. ET |

Rural Action Caucus Leadership

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Chair: | Hon. Greg Puckett , Commissioner, Mercer County, W.Va. |
| Vice Chair: | Hon. Virginia Bass , Supervisor, Humboldt County, Calif. |
| Vice Chair: | Hon. Terryl Clark , Commissioner, Stearns County, Minn. |
| Vice Chair: | Hon. Lena Fowler , Supervisor, Coconino County, Ariz. |
| Vice Chair: | Hon. Robert Post , Commissioner, Banner County, Neb. |
| Vice Chair: | Hon. Orlando Trainer , Supervisor, Oktibbeha County, Miss. |

Meeting Agenda

1:00 P.M. – 1:10 P.M. ET

Call to Order and Welcome

- **Hon. Greg Puckett**, Commissioner, Mercer County, W.Va.

1:10 P.M. – 1:20 P.M. ET

Rural Outreach: White House Office of Public Engagement

With a rise in COVID-19 infections and deaths in rural communities, the Biden Administration is working quickly to create partnerships across rural America to help bolster vaccine confidence and distribution. Additionally, many components of President Biden’s American Rescue Plan were designed to explicitly help rural counties address the unique challenges they face from the public health pandemic and looming economic crisis. Members will receive a brief summary of these efforts and discuss opportunities for rural county leaders to help address these two critical issues.

- **Will McIntee**, Associate Director of Public Engagement, White House

1:20 P.M. – 1:45 P.M. ET

Future-Proofing Rural America: Community Colleges and Rural Economic Development

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a paradigm shift throughout almost every sector of the U.S. economy. As counties work to address the immediate and long-term needs of their local economies, the role of technology creates considerable challenges and opportunities for the local workforce. This session will highlight how our nation’s community college system is uniquely positioned to help rural communities plan for and address the unique challenges of the regions they serve.

- **Dr. Penny Wills**, President, Rural Community College Alliance

1:45 P.M. – 2:05 P.M. ET

Defining Rural: Proposed Changes to Census Data Classifications

In the final hours of the Trump Administration, officials published a last-minute proposal in the Federal Register that would change the minimum population of cities classified as a Metropolitan Statistical Area. This session will provide an overview of the process for classification and potential implications on rural resources.

- **Matt Fannin**, PhD, William H. Alexander Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, Louisiana State University

2:05 P.M. – 2:25 PM ET

Connecting in a Crisis: Federal Rural Broadband Efforts

With most American's being forced to learn, work, shop and heal from home, the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the impacts of our nation's connectivity gaps. This is particularly true for rural America. Throughout the course of this public health crisis, Congress and federal agencies have both worked to create and adapt solutions to these challenges. During this session, members will hear about how the USDA has stepped in to help counties address our nation's digital divide during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Edyael Casperalta**, Senior Policy Advisor, Rural Utility Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

2:25 P.M. – 2:45 P.M. ET

Food for Thought: Bolstering Feeding Programs Under the U.S. Department of Agriculture

During his confirmation hearing, Secretary Vilsack discussed his plans to address the nation's food insecurity and nutrition crisis that existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but has been exacerbated by the crisis. Secretary Vilsack has already signaled that food programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) are at the top of his priority list. During this session, members will hear about USDA's efforts to bolster our nation's feeding programs.

- **Kumar Chandran**, Senior Advisor, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

2:45 P.M. – 2:55 P.M. ET

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

As we welcome in a new Administration, we are excited to announce that one of our own – former Coconino County Supervisor, Liz Archuleta – has been appointed at Director of Intergovernmental Affairs. Liz will join NACo's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee to discuss her new role and how counties are able to connect with the U.S. Department of Agriculture

- **Liz Archuleta**, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, U.S. Department of Agriculture

2:55 P.M. – 3:00 P.M. ET

Closing Statements

- **Hon. Greg Puckett**, Commissioner, Mercer County, W.Va.

3:00 P.M. ET

Meeting Concludes

NACo staff contact: Arthur Scott, Associate Legislative Director, ascott@naco.org or 202.942.4230