

For Immediate Release

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Delta Regional Authority Funds \$149,563 for Connect Arkansas Work in Delta Counties

Helena-West Helena, Ark. (April 17, 2010) - Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-Arkansas) today presented a check on behalf of the Delta Regional Authority for \$149,563 to Connect Arkansas to fund a study that will help develop a plan to further the deployment of broadband technology to communities in three southeastern Arkansas counties.

Speaking to a crowd assembled for the Arkansas Preservation Conference in her hometown of Helena, Lincoln applauded the efforts of both Connect Arkansas and the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) to bring high-speed internet not only to Arkansas, Desha and Phillips counties, but to the 2.8 million residents of Arkansas as well.

“Access to broadband is critical to our efforts to spur development, create jobs, and bolster our economy,” Lincoln said. “I am proud to be a part of today’s presentation, and I applaud the cooperative spirit between Connect Arkansas and the Delta Regional Authority which has made this award a reality.”

Connect Arkansas president C. Sam Walls thanked Senator Lincoln, the Delta Regional Authority and Governor Beebe for their recognition of the importance of the effort.

“With support from Senator Lincoln and DRA, we can move forward on identifying community needs for broadband access. We are grateful for the chance to do this work,” Walls said.

Connect Arkansas was established in 2007 when Governor Mike Beebe signed into law the Connect Arkansas Broadband Act. As a private, non-profit corporation, Connect partners with stakeholders throughout Arkansas in developing and implementing a comprehensive plan for statewide broadband deployment to ensure the creation of a competitive broadband infrastructure that will not only improve personal lives, but also the economic capabilities of all Arkansans.

Today's check, Walls said, will help Connect Arkansas continue working toward its mission of bringing high-speed internet to Arkansans.

"Connect Arkansas looks forward to working with community leaders to expand broadband awareness and availability in Phillips, Arkansas and Desha Counties," Walls said.

Walls noted that funds would be used to help launch the e-Community program in these counties in partnership with the iDelta program initiated by the Delta Regional Authority in 2007.

According to Walls, "We appreciate the leadership of Federal Co-Chair Pete Johnson and the Delta Regional Authority in expanding affordable internet access in the Delta region and helping to create the synergies we will get from the e-Communities outcomes."

Johnson said that today's check presentation is a continuation of the DRA's commitment to the iDelta process, noting that the DRA is proud to partner with Connect Arkansas on a project such as this.

"Connect Arkansas has a great track record of developing e-Community leadership groups that can promote and foster participation in helping Delta counties upgrade their internet awareness and access," Johnson said. "The Delta Regional Authority is pleased to provide funding for Connect Arkansas and looks forward to Connect's work in these counties."

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