

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Office of Commissioner Brandon Presley MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION NORTHERN DISTRICT

### **Presley Announces \$65,000,000 in State Broadband Grants to Mississippi Electric Cooperatives**

Jackson, Mississippi (July 28, 2020)- Today, Public Service Commissioner Brandon Presley announced that thirteen North Mississippi electric cooperatives have received funding from the MS Electric Cooperatives Broadband COVID-19 grant program established in July by the Mississippi Legislature to increase expansion of high-speed internet service to areas which lack service.

The grant program will enable awardees to begin construction in some of Mississippi's most isolated and disconnected areas. Areas that received funding are certain census blocks not covered with broadband service as defined by the FCC (25mbps download, 3 mbps upload). To be awarded the grant, the electric cooperatives must first agree to spend the monies in areas that lack service, match every dollar of grant funds with private funds and provide symmetrical speeds of 100 mbps upload and download to locations in the area. The portion of each project funded by the grant program must be operational by December 30<sup>th</sup>.

“These grant announcements say to rural Mississippians that help is on the way. By targeting these grants to only be spent in areas that lack service, we know that these dollars will go to many places that need internet service most”, Commissioner Presley said. “This is a very forward thinking approach by the Legislature and I am very appreciative for their leadership. Lt. Governor Hosemann, Speaker Gunn, Sen. Joel Carter and Rep. Scott Bounds were champions of this issue from the very start. The lack of broadband access is a major problem that was here before COVID-19, but it has been magnified by the pandemic. We cannot turn our heads and hope this problem gets fixed, it will take bold action like the grant program established by the Legislature. Rural Mississippians deserve the same quality of internet service as those living in downtown Jackson. This grant program is a great start toward that goal.”

These grants will enable the construction of 2,765 miles of fiber optic cable by the end of 2020 with an additional 1,980 miles of construction by the end of 2021. Service will pass 28,447 homes and businesses by the end of 2020 and an additional 17,309 homes and businesses by the end of 2021.

The following North Mississippi electric cooperatives received grant funds:

- Alcorn County Electric Power Association
- Four County Electric Power Association
- Tombigbee Electric Power Association



*for more information contact:*

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- Natchez Trace Electric Power Association
- Northcentral Electric Power Association
- Tallahatchie Valley Electric Power Association
- Delta Electric Power Association
- East Mississippi Electric Power Association
- Prentiss County Electric Power Association
- Tippah Electric Power Association
- North East Mississippi Electric Power Association
- Monroe County Electric Power Association
- Tishomingo County Electric Power Association



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