

May 19, 2021



FROM THE DESK OF
COMMISSIONER
BRENT BAILEY
CENTRAL DISTRICT OFFICE



The Central District is pleased to bring you the latest information concerning utility rates, project developments, Public Service Commission actions and other news you can use. I hope you will find this information to be a useful resource to learn about the Public Service Commission, consumer issues and the continuous work we are doing for the citizens in the Central District and across the state of Mississippi. Thank you again for allowing me to serve you in this capacity.

Brent Bailey



TecInfo Gains ETC Designation for Three Delta Counties

Residents of Bolivar, Sunflower and Washington Counties will soon have access to affordable, high-speed internet service, including speeds of at least 1 gigabit per second (download) and 500 Mbps (upload) through [TecInfo Communications LLC](#) (TecInfo). In addition, TecInfo will provide its customers with voice-grade access through its provision of interconnected VoIP-enabled voice service. These service offerings have been made possible by funding allocated through the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Phase I auction.

[I was honored to join with TecInfo representatives](#) as well as with other local officials in Leland on May 17th to put my signature on the [Order](#) designating TecInfo as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) and making TecInfo able to receive approximately \$11.09 million in RDOF funding to provide broadband service to 2,713 unserved or underserved locations in Bolivar, Sunflower and Washington Counties. This funding will enable TecInfo to build approximately 650 miles

of fiber, primarily underground, providing access to internet technologies for businesses and residents. The project will be funded over a 10-year period, with construction expected to be completed within six years or less.

Overall, Mississippi had a total of 22 applications submitted to the Commission for ETC designation to receive RDOF funds. To date, 17 of those applications have been approved by the Commission. Broadband providers will potentially [receive a collective total of \\$495,725,799.60 to support the deployment of broadband internet service to 218,990 locations across the state.](#)

Mississippi received the second highest amount of RDOF funding in the country, following California, thus indicative of the significant lack of Mississippian's access to broadband internet - especially in rural areas.



Pictured from left to right: Robbie Howe, Planters Bank-Leland; Fred Washington, Sunflower County; Public Service Commissioner Brent Bailey, Greg Hayman, TecInfo; Barbara Brooks, Leland Alderwoman; Mala Brooks, Washington County Supervisor; Aelicia Thomas, Mayor of Rosedale; Nancy Jo King, Leland Alderwoman; and State Representative Otis Anthony





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A DAY IN THE *Mississippi Delta*

While in Washington County, I met with representatives of Delta Health-The Medical Center in Greenville to learn about their plans for growth and expansion to bring more health and wellness services to the Mississippi Delta and discuss ways to avoid disruptions of critical utilities.



We had good conversations with Administrator Stephanie Patton and Director of Plant Operations, Paul Dillon at Delta Health- The Medical Center in



I thank the Leland Rotary Club President, Ron Walters, for inviting me to come provide an update from the Commission and to answer some of their questions.

I also provided an update on Commission activities to the members of the Leland Rotary Club. This club has a rich history of service to the Leland community.



We also enjoyed a special visit with Don Christy at Yazoo Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District.



In addition, I stopped by the offices of the Delta Council and the YMD Joint Water Management District to visit with their friendly staffs.

Below: We made a long overdue stop in Stoneville at the Delta Council to visit with Frank Howell.



Stopped for a scenic view at the Greenville waterfront on the mainline levee.



FUN FACT: Leland, Mississippi is the birthplace of KERMIT THE FROG!

Getting out and about in the Central District and connecting with constituents is always a highlight of serving as your Public Service Commissioner!



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BROADBAND NEWS

NARUC Task Force Issues Recommendations for Improved Broadband Access

The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners Broadband Expansion Task Force has released a set of [Draft Recommendations](#) to ensure greater accessibility and coordination to close gaps in broadband service. Proposed recommendations focus on five areas: broadband mapping, enhancing broadband program coordination, ensuring that broadband providers meet their obligations, supporting non-traditional providers and broadband adoption through partnerships and programs. The task force will hold an open virtual meeting at 1 p.m. CT on June 2 to take comments regarding the Draft Recommendations. Information on the meeting and preregistration to provide testimony is available at <https://bit.ly/33Lr3GO>.

Next Century Cities Launches Campaign to Improve Broadband Mapping with New Report

Next Century Cities has released [Broadband Mapping Across the U.S.: Local, State, and Federal Methods & Contradictions](#), a report that reflects the ongoing need to improve methods of collecting broadband access data. Inaccurate federal broadband mapping data impacts broadband deployment efforts throughout the U.S., including in Mississippi. Using Federal Communications Commission (FCC) data, state mapping, and submissions from local leaders, Next Century Cities conducted a state-by-state review of broadband access. **While the FCC claims that 80.3% of Mississippians have access to broadband internet, Broadband Now estimates that only 58.7% of Mississippians have access to broadband internet.** Rural leaders are encouraged to weigh in on social media on the state of broadband access in their communities using the #ShowMeYourMaps hashtag.

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program Launched on May 12

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is an [FCC program](#) to help families and households struggling to afford internet service during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Emergency Broadband Benefit will provide a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers. **See the full list of [program participants in Mississippi](#).**



CYBERSECURITY NEWS

White House Issues Executive Order on Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity

Last week, the White House issued an [Executive Order](#) (EO) to improve the nation's cybersecurity and protect federal government networks. One of the drivers for this EO is the SolarWinds attack that was discovered in late 2020 and impacted government and private sector systems. The recent Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack that shut down the delivery of refined petroleum products to much of the Mid-Atlantic states was another reminder of the increasingly sophisticated cyber activity being advanced by bad actors against public and private sector entities. Although the EO is specific to federal systems, many of the topics addressed are universal in nature and private sector companies are encouraged to take immediate action to implement comprehensive cybersecurity measures.



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MISO/OMS NEWS

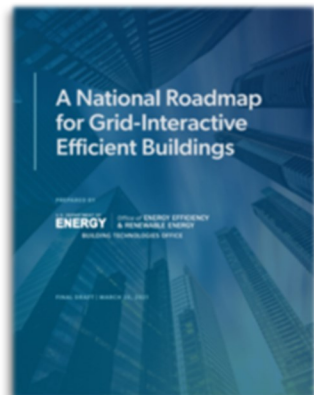
MISO has posted the [2020 State of the Market Report for the MISO Electricity Markets](#) on May 7. The report, produced by Potomac Economics, MISO's Independent Market Monitor, reports on the competitive performance and operational efficiency of MISO's electricity markets and provides recommendations for future improvements. MISO operates competitive wholesale electricity markets in the Midcontinent region that extends geographically from Montana in the west to Michigan in the east and to Louisiana in the south. The MISO South subregion shown in blue was integrated into MISO in December 2013. The markets generally performed well in 2020. **A 22% reduction in natural gas prices combined with a 4% decrease in average load due to the public response to COVID-19 contributed to a 16% decrease in real-time energy prices throughout MISO, which averaged \$22 per MWh in 2020.** However, transmission congestion caused by new wind generation, unplanned outages and extreme weather events put upward pressure on energy costs in certain areas of MISO. MISO is also working to integrate new technologies (battery storage resources) and generation fleet transitions into future market functions.

MISO also presented its [Regional Resource Assessment](#) to stakeholders for the first time. This assessment is intended to give better visibility into expected resource evolution over a 20-year planning horizon and identify potential issues caused under various resource mix assumptions. MISO plans to produce this report annually going forward.

The [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission](#) denied [MISO's request for an extension](#) of its effective date to comply with Order No. 841 to March 2025. FERC's Order 841 was issued in 2018 to boost the electric storage sector and ensure that it would be fairly compensated for its unique role in the electricity market. The Organization of MISO States (OMS) submitted a letter expressing disappointment of MISO's request, but not opposing the extension of time.

BUILDING ENERGY EFFICIENCY NEWS

According to the new [2021 Better Buildings Progress Report](#), the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)'s [Better Buildings Initiative](#), in collaboration with nearly 1,000 businesses, government, and other partners, **saved \$13.5 billion in energy costs and avoided more than 130 million metric tons of carbon emissions in the past year.** Better Building Partners represent more than 30 of the country's Fortune 100 companies, 12 of the top 25 U.S. employers, 12% of the U.S. manufacturing energy footprint, and 13% of total commercial building space, as well as 17 federal agencies, eight national laboratories, and more than 80 states and local governments. The report also highlights the [12 organizations](#) that achieved their Better Buildings Challenge goals in 2020.



The DOE, in partnership with Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and the Brattle Group, [announced](#) the publication of [A National Roadmap for Grid-Interactive Efficient Buildings](#), which charts a course to triple the energy efficiency and demand flexibility of U.S. buildings sector by 2030 and capitalize on an estimated \$100-200 billion-dollar market opportunity.

Buildings account for over 70% of U.S. electricity consumption. By combining energy efficiency and demand flexibility, grid-interactive efficient buildings (GEBs) can remake buildings into a clean and flexible resource. The report offers 14 recommendations for addressing the top barriers to GEB adoption and deployment, with "action steps" for all key industry stakeholders.



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Last Week at the MPSC

- ✉ The following stakeholders have submitted comments regarding **Entergy Mississippi, LLC's** Integrated Resource Plan Technical Conference materials (2019-UA-232): [SREA](#); [AEMA](#); [SACE](#); **Sierra Club**. (Comments were filed Confidentially)
- ✉ The Commission [issued](#) an order granting **TecInfo Communications LLC's** application for designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier to receive Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I auction for voice and broadband services in **Bolivar, Sunflower and Washington Counties**.
- ✉ The Commission also [issued](#) a Suspension Order regarding the Notice of **Spire Mississippi's** Intent to Adopt a Weather Normalization Adjustment Rider in order to further investigate.
- ✉ **Great River Utility Operating Company, LLC** [filed](#) Supplemental Schedules in the form of updated maps to support its Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for sale and transfer of certain wastewater disposal assets, facilities and property for the following systems in the Central District: [Culkin Utility - Brookwood](#) (Warren); [Culkin Utility - China Grove](#) (Warren); [Enviroserve](#) (Warren); [H&B](#) (Warren); [King Farms Development](#) (Lauderdale); [Ring Road Utilities](#) (Warren); [Ring Road Utilities - Silver Leaf](#) (Warren); [Red River - S2 Environmental](#) (Hinds); [Black Creek - Utility One](#) (Warren); [T&J - Utility One](#) (Warren); [Quality Utilities - Utility One](#) (Warren).
- ✉ The Public Utility Staff requested additional information and clarification from **Great River Utility Operating Co., LLC** via shortage letters for the following systems in Warren County: [Pecan Village, LLC](#); [Affordable Homes of Vicksburg, Inc.](#)
- ✉ **Metropolitan Telecommunications of MS, Inc.** [filed](#) a Revised Tariff Filing.
- ✉ **Wide Voice, LLC** [filed](#) its Application Certificate for Public Convenience Necessity to Provide Telecommunications Services throughout MS.
- ✉ **Hernando Venture, LLC's** [filed](#) a Motion for Continuance regarding a Certificate for Public Convenience and Necessity in Desoto County and **Entergy Mississippi, LLC** [filed](#) a response to **Hernando Venture, LLC's** Motion.

To assist in its assessment of the **Public Utility Infrastructure Review** responses received from Mississippi's electric, natural gas, water, and telecommunication public utilities, the Commission put forth a **[Request for Proposals](#)** from qualified, interested individuals and/or companies to examine the resiliency, reliability, fitness and weatherization, access to key materials, communication plans with the Commission and consumers, methods used to secure additional personnel, and efficiency and effectiveness of utility management decisions made during extreme weather events. **All Proposals must be received by the Commission no later than 5:00 p.m. Central Time on June 15, 2021.**



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **22** complaints in the Central District.

Electric Companies	10
Telecommunications	10
Water/Sewer	2

Last week, the Central District received a total of **216** complaints from consumers against potential telemarketers through our no call app, website and mail-ins.

We encourage consumers to file telemarketing complaints with the Federal Trade Commission at <http://www.donotcall.gov/> in addition to filing complaints with the Mississippi Public Service Commission.