

## **NELSON: \$13.9 MILLION IN RECOVERY FUNDS FOR NEBRASKA BROADBAND**

August 18, 2010 – Nebraska’s Senator Ben Nelson welcomed an announcement by the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture that Nebraska will receive more than \$13.9 million in recovery funds to expand broadband high-speed Internet access across the state. The funds are made possible by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

“These recovery funds will be used by the state and a consortium of Nebraska broadband providers to provide high-speed Internet access to rural areas,” said Senator Nelson. “Broadband is a critical tool for communities when it comes to giving small businesses a competitive playing field, providing expanded educational opportunities in our schools, and linking rural hospitals and medical facilities to telehealth networks. This investment of Recovery Act funds will help support those advancements and keep Nebraskans from all over the state connected.”

NebraskaLink, a consortium of seven Nebraska telecom providers, will receive \$11,547,866 in recovery funds with nearly \$5 million in matching contributions to allow the organization to offer affordable middle-mile broadband service in communities throughout the state. The project plans to directly connect up to 100 community institutions to broadband. As many as 204,000 people stand to benefit as do 8,000 businesses. The seven members of NebraskaLink are American Broadband, Consolidated Companies, Great Plains Communications, Hamilton Telecommunications, Hartelco, Nebraska Central Telephone Co., and Northeast Nebraska Telephone Co.

“NebraskaLink is excited about the opportunity to develop a Nebraska-wide, state-of-the-art, fiber optic network and to make a positive contribution to the community, public services, and economic development. We look forward to working with our community anchor institutions, private business, and all stakeholders in making this network available to serve Nebraskans,” said Paul Ludwick, NebraskaLink’s Chief Executive Officer.

The state of Nebraska will receive \$2,416,403 with nearly \$1.3 million in matching contributions to expand broadband computer service to economically at-risk populations in the state by upgrading broadband access for approximately 45 public computer centers, deploying more than 600 new workstations and upgrading another 475 workstations, and providing computer literacy training at libraries across the state.

The funds were competitively awarded and are part of \$1.8 billion in broadband funding announced today by US Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke and US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. Under the Recovery Act, both agencies are distributing a total of nearly \$7 billion in grants and loans to improve high-speed Internet access across the country.

*Senator Nelson played a key role in the passage of the \$787 billion Recovery Act. He worked with a bipartisan group of nearly 20 Senators to better focus The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act on tax cuts for the middle class and job creation for millions of Americans. Senator Nelson led the group through the initial bill line by line, dollar by dollar, to reduce spending and cut out \$108 billion of inefficient or less-stimulative spending. The bipartisan group helped the improved bill win congressional approval. President Obama signed it into law February 17, 2009.*

*Senator Nelson is posting information about the release of Recovery Act funds on his website as it becomes available. Visit [http://bennelson.senate.gov/feature\\_4.cfm](http://bennelson.senate.gov/feature_4.cfm) for more information.*