

PSC DEPARTMENT DIGEST

Nebraska Public Service Commission

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PSC Participates in Congressional Roundtables/Forums

In early April, Nebraska Public Service Commissioners and staff joined members of Nebraska's Congressional delegations for a series of roundtable and forum discussions on a variety of topics.

Nebraska U.S. Senator Deb Fischer and FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr joined PSC Chair Dan Watermeier and 911 Department Staff for a roundtable on emergency communication, hosted by the Cass County Sheriff's Department. After a tour of the Cass County 911 center, the PSC state 911 department provide an update on the transition to Next Generation 911. Discussion was held on how to leverage federal, state, and local resources to improve emergency services communications.

Next on the agenda, Commissioners and PSC telecommunications department staff joined the Senator, FCC Commissioner, state officials and telecommunication carriers to discuss broadband deployment and prioritizing federal assistance funding for broadband access in unserved areas of Nebraska.

The Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) Headquarters was the sight for a forum on U.S. Energy Infrastructure. PSC Commissioners along with state and local leaders heard from Congressman Don Bacon, Senator Pete Ricketts and Joseph McClelland, Director of the Office of Energy Infrastructure Security (OEIS) on the need to secure our energy infrastructure from cyber-attacks and other threats.



Updates Coming to NSTEP Program

Beginning July 18, qualified individuals receiving assistance from the Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program (NSTEP) will notice changes to the program's eligibility requirements as the result of a new law (LB-1031).

Administered by the Nebraska Public Service Commission, NSTEP assists qualified individuals who are deaf, have visual/hearing, or a speech disability obtain specialized telecommunications equipment.

The new law updates the eligibility standards and criteria to allow two qualified residents living at the same address to receive telecommunications equipment. Previously only one resident per household was allowed to receive assistance. It also allows a recipient of telecommunications equipment to reapply for NSTEP assistance every three years instead of every five years.

To be eligible to receive a wireless device (cellphone) or other qualified telecommunication equipment as a part of NSTEP, residents must complete an application, including a certification by a professional that the applicant is deaf, hard of hearing, or has a speech impairment.

Once deemed eligible, applicants will receive a voucher that they can take to a participating vendor. The voucher will cover the cost of the equipment up to \$1,000. Participants are responsible for any monthly fees associated with the device, including a required data plan, if applicable.

Information on NSTEP and how residents can qualify for a voucher to be used toward the cost of a mobile wireless device or to apply for other telecommunications equipment can be found on the For Consumer TRS/NSTEP page of the PSC website at < <https://psc.nebraska.gov/for-consumers/trsnstep-consumer-information> >.

PSC Awards Second Round of CPF Grants for Broadband Buildout

In June, the Nebraska Service Commission approved an Order ([CPF-2](#)) awarding a second round of Capital Projects Fund (CPF) grants designed to bring broadband to unserved and underserved areas of the state. CPF grants are statutorily required to be awarded in Congressional Districts One and Three, with the requirement that at least \$40 million in grant funding is awarded in each Congressional district for eligible broadband projects.

The PSC received 60 applications for funding during the second round. As part of the grant review process challenges were also received. Upon review of the applications and challenges, the PSC determined 28 applications would be funded for a total of \$30,921,432 in CPF grant funds in the 3rd Congressional district. The awarded projects will bring broadband to approximately 1,640 unserved and 1,570 underserved locations. Projects awarded during this second round are required to be completed by Dec. 4, 2025, unless granted an extension by the Commission.

To date, the PSC has awarded more than \$85 million through the [CPF grant program](#) for broadband buildout.



Liquor License Requirements for Bus Companies Providing Special Party Services

In 2020, Nebraska Unicameral passed LB 734 relating to the Nebraska Liquor Control Act and the licensure of special party buses.

The new law codified as [Neb. Revised Stat. § 53-123.18](#) provides in part that the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission may issue a liquor license to any person providing special party bus service pursuant to a certificate of public convenience and necessity granted by the Nebraska Public Service Commission when that person allows the consumption of alcohol in its special party bus.

Under the PSC's regulations, there are two distinct types of bus services that can be operated under a certificate of public convenience and necessity: **special party and charter**. Each allows the authority holder to provide bus service, and often each designation is used to provide the same services. The only difference between the two is how payment is received in exchange for the services.

Special Party service is when a group or groups of one or more person's individually contract for transportation to a common destination with each person paying an individual sum.

Charter service is when groups of seven or more persons collectively contract for the transportation paying one lump sum.

Both types of authorities **can be used** to operate what the public may identify as a "**party bus**".

However, [Neb Rev Stat. § 53-123.18](#) only places a requirement for bus companies operating as a **special party service** to obtain a liquor license. That requirement **is not** placed on bus companies providing **charter service**. Consequently, there **are not** many bus companies in Nebraska that the Liquor Control Commission has issued licenses to. There are approximately 23 companies that could provide special party service, all but three companies also possess the ability to provide charter service. According to Liquor Control Commission data, only 11 companies have been issued a Class U Special Party Bus liquor license.

That does not necessarily mean that those 12 remaining companies do not allow the consumption of alcohol onboard. But, more likely, that those companies operate their service as charter services, meaning they are not required to obtain a liquor license.

If the goal is to ensure that a company possess a liquor license whenever there is alcohol being consumed on a bus, then expanding the requirement to apply to charter service would be necessary. Those same concerns may also be present in the provision of limousine service, but under current statute those carriers do not possess any requirement to obtain a liquor license.

Either proposed change would require a statutory change to [Neb Rev Stat. § 53-123.18](#)

Questions? Email the PSC Transportation Department @ psc.motorfilings@nebraska.gov

Statutory Changes to Grain Warehouse & Grain Dealer Acts Set for July

On July 18, LB 262 passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor, will become law. The new law makes statutory changes to the Grain Warehouse Act and the Grain Dealer Act.

A [memo](#), detailing the statutory changes was sent out by the PSC Grain Department to all licensed warehouses and dealers in the state.

"It's important that management of these warehouses and grain dealers licensed in Nebraska are aware of the new law and what it means for them," said Terri Fritz, Director PSC Grain Department. "

The new law includes the following statutory changes to the Grain Warehouse Act:

- Language cleanup references from "warehouseman" to "warehouse operator".
- Definition of grain includes reference of organic and non-GMO grains.
- Federal background checks will be required even if one has been done previously if the primary party goes to a different licensed facility.
- Maximum security goes to \$1,000,000.
- The Commission will no longer set the maximum handling and storage rates for licensed warehouse.

Statutory changes to the Grain Dealer Act include:

- Definition of grain includes reference of organic and non-GMO grains.
- Federal background checks will be required if even if one has been done previously if the primary party goes to a different licensed facility.
- Maximum security goes to \$1,000,000.

If you operate a licensed grain warehouse or are a licensed grain dealer in Nebraska and the statute requires a change to your security, the PSC will mail your security endorsement to you prior to July 18 the date in which the security will need to be executed.

You can read a copy of the memo, on the Grain Department page of the psc website at < <https://psc.nebraska.gov/grain> >.

Questions? Email our Grain Department at psc.grain@nebraska.gov



PSC Provides Additional Services for Public Safety Answering Points

The Nebraska Public Service Commission (PSC) has entered into a five-year contract with [RapidSOS](#) to provide its premium service UNITE to the 67 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in the state.

An added safety platform, RapidSOS enhances the Next Generation 911 environment by providing caller location information to 911 centers even if a wireless carrier is unable to deliver a call. Among the suite of services offered through RapidSOS UNITE, are enhanced caller location information and single sign-on access.

“RapidSOS is currently being utilized by many of the state’s PSAPs,” said State 911 Director Dave Sankey. “By elevating all PSAPs to the company’s UNITE modules, it will provide even more tools to supplement caller location capabilities should a disruption in wireless service occur.”

More than 80 percent of emergency calls today, are made by wireless devices. With the integration of RapidSOS UNITE, PSAPs will receive an added layer of support in providing emergency response.

Director Sankey said, “We are pleased to be able to provide this additional service and we are working with RapidSOS and the PSAPs to put together a plan to begin the implementation process.”

Transmission Lines Topic Of NPPD Engineer Training

The Commission through its Natural Gas Department has the responsibility of regulating a narrow area regarding the construction, operation, and maintenance of high voltage transmission lines (Neb. Rev. Stat. §75-702-§75-724).

In April, the Commission was invited to participate in a training for electrical engineers held at the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), office in Norfolk.

During the event, Nichole Mulcahy, Director of the PSC Natural Gas Department, provided an overview of the Commission’s responsibilities when it comes to approval of high voltage electric transmission lines. She outlined the Commission’s process, and the requirements applicants must adhere to.

On average the Commission receives some 40 engineering applications a year. Interested in learning more? Check out the Engineering PowerPoint presentation, on the PSC website @ <https://psc.nebraska.gov/natural-gas/electric-transmission-line-information>



Commissioner Schram Receives FCC Appointment

Nebraska Public Service, District 3, Commissioner Tim Schram has been appointed to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Communications, Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council IX (CSRIC).

CSRIC IX, is charged with providing recommendations to the FCC to promote the security, and interoperability of our nation's communication systems. Under its current iteration the Council will be addressing issues to include best practices for the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), ensuring consumer access to 911 on all available networks as technology evolves, and the security and reliability risks unique to emergency 6G networks and services.

Commissioner Schram's appointment to the CSRIC IX Council runs through March 2026.



PSC Directors Earn State Government Leadership Certificates

The PSC congratulates Transportation Department Director Dillion Keiffer-Johnson, and Grain Department Director Terri Fritz (not pictured) on their recent graduation from the State Government Leadership Certification (NSGLC) Program.

"The Commission is privileged to have a wealth of experience and leadership," said PSC Executive Director Thomas Golden. "We thank Dillion and Terri for their investment in the PSC and their commitment to this year long certification process."

A custom learning experience, the NSGLC curriculum combines the knowledge of respected professionals along with internal experts to provide state employees in a supervisory role or experienced managers the tools to continue to grow as effective leaders.



PSC Welcomes New Hires

After spending nine years with the Military Department, and with 24 years of information technology experience, **James Hood** joins the PSC as its new logistics and technology manager. Originally from Indiana, James moved to Nebraska in 1993 after serving three-years in the Military in Fort Riley, Kansas. In his spare time, he enjoys playing darts on local leagues and the occasional out-of-state tournament. He is married and has four children and 4 grandchildren.



James Hood-Logistics & Technology Manager

Brett Bode, joins the PSC Telecommunications Department as its new Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Program Manager. In addition to an M.B.A. from the University of Nebraska- at Omaha and a B.S. in Finance from Drake University, he brings 24 years of experience in the telecommunications industry to his new role at the Commission having worked at Lumen supporting wholesale and local voice products. Brett lives in Omaha with his wife Marie and their three kids Alaria (21), Bradyn (20) and Kaiya (16). In his spare time, he can be found working on a home or yard project, repairing the family cars, or helping out at their church. He also enjoys trying out new recipes and helping with any of the many crafts his family has going on.



Brett Bode- TRS Program Manager



Leslie Horwart- Policy Analyst

The PSC's new policy analyst in the Telecommunications Department is **Leslie Horwart**. With a bachelor's degree in healthcare management from Bellevue University she worked at the Department of Health and Human Services in the Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division, before taking a position at Molina Healthcare. Leslie tells us she is happy to be a state employee again and learning something new. A mom to two daughters, Austin (18) and Savannah (10), she enjoys reading, movies, musicals and being outdoors.



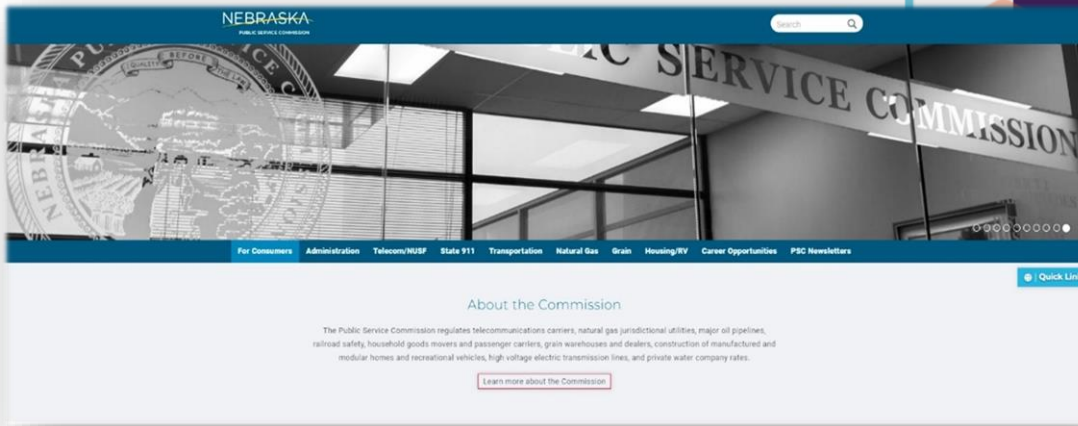
Alex Timperley- Legal Counsel

Legal Counsel **Alex Timperley** joins the PSC after spending three years working with legislation for the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS). Prior to his time with NDCS, he worked as a legislative attorney for the South Dakota Legislature where he drafted legislation and staffed legislative committees. Originally from Norfolk, Alex holds a bachelor's degree from Wayne State College and a law degree from the Nebraska College of Law. In his spare time, he enjoys any form of athletic competition, trying new recipes and spending time with his dogs, Maple, and Daisy.



Drake Atkins- Law Clerk

Drake Atkins is the Commission's new law clerk. Drake has a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Wyoming and is attending UNL School of Law. As part of a military family, he has lived in several states and is currently serving in the Nebraska Army National Guard. He and his wife Madeline presently call Lincoln home, where he enjoys fishing, baking, and collecting fountain pens.



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The Nebraska Public Service Commission regulates telecommunications carriers, natural gas jurisdictional utilities, major oil pipelines, railroad safety, household goods movers and passenger carriers, grain warehouses and dealers, construction of manufactured and modular homes and recreation vehicles, high voltage electric transmission lines, and private water company rates.

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