

1 **Northwest Public Power Association**
2 **Resolution 2019-16**
3 **In Support of Rural Broadband Deployment and Use**
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5 **Background**
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7 Approximately 63 percent of all native Americans, and 85 percent of those who live in rural
8 areas do not have access to broadband at current federal minimum standards. This
9 underserved population includes much of the rural, and in some cases urban areas where
10 NWPPA members provide electric service.
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12 The absence of high-speed broadband service limits economic development opportunities in
13 rural areas of the United States for small businesses, or cottage industries. Learning and
14 classwork is increasingly an online service, and unavailable for many rural students without
15 access to sufficient broadband. In addition to the need for learning services, many rural
16 residents also do not have access to telemedicine services leaving rural residents without
17 emerging telemedicine access that can provide lifesaving medical consultations and diagnoses.
18 The internet, especially at true broadband speeds can increase a sense of community
19 connectivity and security for house-bound individuals.
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21 Many public and consumer-owned utilities own or have access to high capacity
22 telecommunications networks that support their operations, monitoring and maintenance of
23 their electric distribution systems. States have authorized various levels of authority regarding
24 public broadband networks.

25 Wholesale broadband authority, consumer-owned broadband networks, municipal broadband
26 networks, and public-private partnerships help unserved or underserved rural areas gain access
27 to internet speeds at, or greater than current federal minimum standards.
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29 State and federal assistance for broadband expansion is desperately needed in rural areas to
30 accelerate the deployment of broadband services. Expansion of rural broadband services may
31 be accelerated through a broader definition of qualifying entities for state and federal
32 assistance, and through federal legislative and administrative rules that provide tax credits for
33 rural customers, increase public-private partnerships, provide technical support and guidance
34 or grants.
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36 Current limitations on broadband authority, financial and technical support are barriers for
37 communities who could otherwise enjoy the economic and social benefits of adequate access
38 to broadband services.

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40 **NWPPA Position**

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42 • NWPPA supports efforts to obtain local, state, regional and national support for policies and legislation
43 which support public broadband deployment, funding opportunities, awareness, customer adoption,
44 and digital literacy.

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46 • NWPPA supports the efforts by local, state, and federal entities to remove barriers that prevent public
47 utilities from providing broadband services to their consumers.

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49 • NWPPA supports rural broadband deployment initiatives at the local, state, regional, and federal level
50 in legislative proceedings that are coordinated such that they do not compromise the safety and
51 integrity of the electric utility infrastructure.

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53 • NWPPA supports broadband deployment, particularly in rural underserved areas provided that it does
54 not create unintended cost shifts from the broadband deployment onto the electric utility.

55 Origination Date: 2019.