



Department of
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Governor's Office of Appalachia, Connect Ohio, & Chesapeake Energy Launch Connect Appalachia Broadband Initiative

*New Task Force Aim is to Bring Broadband Availability and Adoption Rates to
within State and National Standards*

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COLUMBUS – Today, the Governor's Office of Appalachia in conjunction with Connect Ohio, and Chesapeake Energy announced the launch of Connect Appalachia Broadband Initiative, a special initiative to address the broadband divide facing rural Appalachia. The Connect Appalachia Broadband Initiative will be run by a task force made up of state and local stakeholders, both public and private, to immediately take action to overcome connectivity barriers and digital literacy gaps in the region.

"The Connect Appalachia Broadband Initiative is the result of government, nonprofit organization and the private sector collaboration to assist Ohio's Appalachian community," said Jason Wilson, Director of the Governor's Office of Appalachia. "I believe that with this partnership we will greatly reduce the number of Ohioans in Appalachia without broadband service."

Rural Appalachian Ohio faces a significant barrier to the opportunities that the Internet brings due to connectivity and adoption gaps. In its recent Connect Ohio report, [Technology Barriers and Adoption in Rural Appalachian Ohio](#), it was found that 531,000 adults in rural Appalachia do not have home broadband –

124,000 reported that service is either unavailable, or the speeds are insufficient in meeting their needs.

The Governor's Office of Appalachia, housed within the Ohio Department of Development, is establishing the Appalachia Broadband Task Force to immediately begin addressing the broadband gap in rural Appalachia. It will work to address availability gaps, provide more access to broadband by private partners, and increase broadband adoption and digital literacy through Connect Ohio's [Every Citizen Online](#) program.

The task force will be administered by Connect Ohio and co-chaired by the Governor's Office of Appalachia and Chesapeake Energy. Members will be technology industry representatives, equipment vendors, federal, state and county agencies and officials, foundations and community organizations, employers and recruiters.

"Chesapeake Energy is thrilled to be a part of a solution to connect Appalachia through high-speed internet service. Having access to valuable resources in areas like employment and education is crucial," said Pete Kenworthy, Manager Media Relations, Chesapeake Energy Corporation. "We look forward to working with the Appalachia Broadband Task Force on this initiative."

The aim of the task force and new initiative is to pull Appalachia to within state and national standards in broadband adoption within 24 months.

"While our research has shown the gaps in vital broadband for the region, we are confident that the collaboration of public and private partners can be a game changer for the region," said Connect Ohio Executive Director Stu Johnson. "Bringing broadband to the unserved areas of the region will mean increased job & educational opportunities, attractiveness to new businesses, and better access to critical social resources. Connect Ohio looks forward to the important work ahead in being part of the solution."

The failure to connect has significant implications on the region's ability to keep up with the demands of the digital economy. According to Connect Ohio's research:

- One in three children in rural Appalachian Ohio does not have broadband service at home
- One out of three households do not have a home computer in the Appalachian region

There is a growing divide between the digital haves and have-nots:

- Less than one-third of the poorest Americans have adopted broadband, while at least 90 percent of the richest have broadband

- About **46 percent of low-income families have adopted broadband** at home, compared with more than 90 percent of higher-income families
- Only **55 percent of residents in rural Appalachian Ohio subscribe to home broadband** service, significantly lower than the state average of 66 percent
- The broadband adoption gap in Appalachia Ohio exists across all income levels, particularly between those at both the highest and lowest income levels

The announcement of the initiative took place at Connect Ohio's quarterly Technology Association meeting in Columbus on Friday, December 9, 2011.

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About Connect Ohio: Connect Ohio, a division of Connected Nation, is a nonprofit, technology-neutral public-private partnership that works with telecommunications providers, business and community leaders, information technology companies, researchers, public agencies, libraries, and universities in an effort to help extend affordable high-speed Internet service to every Ohio household. For more information about what Connect Ohio is doing to accelerate technology in Ohio's communities, visit <http://www.connectohio.org>.

Follow Connect Ohio on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Governor's Office of Appalachia: As an advocate for Ohio's 32 Appalachian counties, the Governor's Office of Appalachia works on behalf of the Appalachian Regional Commission in Washington, D.C. to promote the region's assets and to support local, regional, state, and federal initiatives. These initiatives contribute to the economic, educational, and community prosperity of the people of Ohio's Appalachian region.

About Chesapeake Energy: Chesapeake is the second-largest producer of natural gas, a Top 15 producer of oil and natural gas liquids and the most active driller of new wells in the U.S. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the company's operations are focused on discovering and developing unconventional natural gas and oil fields onshore in the U.S. Chesapeake owns leading positions in the Barnett, Haynesville, Bossier, Marcellus and Pearsall natural gas shale plays and in the Granite Wash, Cleveland, Tonkawa, Mississippi Lime, Bone Spring, Avalon, Wolfcamp, Wolfberry, Eagle Ford, Niobrara, Three Forks/Bakken and Utica unconventional liquids plays. The company has also vertically integrated its operations and owns substantial midstream, compression, drilling, trucking, pressure pumping and other oilfield service assets.