



Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB)

112 State Street

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<https://publicservice.vermont.gov/vcbb>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VERMONT BROADBAND PROVIDERS TO TESTIFY BEFORE U.S. SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE

Montpelier, Vermont – Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) grantees NEK Broadband Executive Director Christa Shute and Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT) Vice President of Industry Relations Roger Nishi will testify on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, at 3:00 before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; Subcommittee on Rural Development and Energy. The hearing is entitled, “Rural Broadband: Connecting our Communities to the Digital Economy.”

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a series of important broadband programs geared to the most rural areas of America where it is most costly to build and operate broadband infrastructure. True high-speed internet is fundamental for effective participation in our nation's economy, healthcare, education, and personal job success, as well as access to federal and state services, the political process, and community engagement.

“NEK Broadband has successfully applied for and managed grants through USDA. We are pleased to have this opportunity to share with members of the U.S. Senate both the ongoing importance of these programs and constructive suggestions from first-hand experience on how they can be improved for future rounds of funding,” said NEK Broadband Executive Director Christa Shute.

“This is a testament to what we already know in Vermont. The people running our Communications Union Districts (CUDs) and their partners are nationally recognized experts and leaders in the industry. We are lucky to have them working for us every day in Vermont,” said VCBB Executive Director Christine Hallquist.

According to Eric Haskin, president and CEO of Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom, “Over many decades, WCVT has had a strong relationship with USDA and RUS, as well as with its predecessor agency, the REA whom my parents worked closely with. We have received both loans and grants that have helped us make generational

technology investments to our network, including upgrading from iron wire to copper, party lines to direct dial switching, and now our next evolution from copper DSL to fiber-to-the-home technology.”

VCBB has made grants of \$8.3 million to WCVT and \$20.9 to NEK Broadband. You can watch the testimony live at 3:00 Wednesday at [Rural Broadband: Connecting our Communities | Senate Committee On Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry](#).

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