Contact: Jessica Denson, Director, Communications
Email: jdenson@connectednation.org
Phone: 502-341-2024
Website: connectednation.org/texas

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Help Improve High-Speed Internet Access in Rains County

Rains County, TX (November 5, 2019) – The Rains County Broadband Committee, in partnership with Connected Nation Texas (CN Texas), is right now working to develop a Technology Action Plan for the area. As part of that effort, the committee needs residents, businesses, and other organizations to share their input about their high-speed internet (broadband) access or lack thereof.

"Reliable high-speed internet access has become a critical necessity for families and businesses in our increasingly interconnected world, and I'm committed to closing the staggering gaps in coverage that are impacting many of the rural Texans I'm proud to represent," said Congressman John Ratcliffe (R-TX). "I'm grateful for the opportunity to partner with Connected Nation to help expand wireless broadband capabilities for people in Rains County through targeted, localized efforts and community engagement. I look forward to the seeing the positive impact this program will have in Northeast Texas."

CN Texas is a local division of Connected Nation (CN)—a national nonprofit that has worked directly with Texas communities since 2009. Its mission is to improve lives by providing innovative solutions to expand the access, adoption, and use of broadband and its related technologies to all people.

The Rains County Broadband Committee is made up of local community leaders from various sectors all working toward a common mission—to expand broadband access, adoption, and use throughout the county. The Committee will leverage CN Texas' Connected Community Engagement Program to collect surveys, analyze the data, and develop structured and community-specific plan for Rains County. The surveys, which take just ten minutes to complete, can be found at: https://www.myconnectedcommunity.org/rains-county/.

"Once we get input from those living and working in Rains County, our committee can more effectively develop a plan of action," said Judge Wayne Wolfe, Rains County Court. "It will help ensure we have the most accurate, up-to-date information. Working in the local court system I have seen firsthand how important internet access is for utilizing government services and records. As a community member, I've seen how it can affect our families and businesses and I want Rains County to be a place where all people can thrive and have a great quality of life."

According to data released in May by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), 31.1 percent of rural Texans lack access to high-speed internet. That's compared to just

2.6 percent in urban areas. Recognizing the need to expand access in the Lone Star State the Texas Rural Funders Collaborative has funded CN Texas' work for two-and-half-years.

This includes identifying 23 communities that can leverage the Connected Community Engagement Program through this new statewide effort—Rains County is among the first.

"We have worked in Texas for a long time in places like McCamey and Marfa, but we've not had a statewide focus for a few years," said Tom Stephenson, Community Technology Advisory, CN Texas. "We're now trying to identify about two dozen communities that are ready to take action to improve their broadband environment. We always work locally and with those who have a personal stake in their community and want to take part in improving quality of life for all people. Rains County's leaders and local stakeholders are actively working to do just that across the county."

Connected Nation has helped more than 300 communities across the United States develop community-specific Technology Action Plans. To learn more about the Connected program head to https://connectednation.org/connect-my-community/.

To learn more about CN Texas, email us at info@connectednation.org or visit our website at www.connectednation.org/texas.

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About Connected Nation Texas: CN Texas is a local division of the national nonprofit Connected Nation. Our mission is to improve lives by providing innovative solutions that expand access to and increase the adoption and use of broadband (high-speed internet) and its related technologies for all people. Everyone belongs in a Connected Nation.

Connected Nation works with consumers, local community leaders, states, technology providers, and foundations to develop and implement technology expansion programs with core competencies centered on a mission to improve digital inclusion for people and places previously underserved or overlooked. For more information, please visit: connectednation.org and follow Connected Nation on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.

About the Texas Rural Funders Collaborative: The mission of the Texas Rural Funders Collaborative (TRFC) is to partner with rural Texans to achieve their vision of prosperity and wellbeing. The group's strategies recognize and are informed by rural expertise and assets. The TRFC leverages local, philanthropic, state and federal resources to collaborate on projects, support local capacity and leadership, share research, convene stakeholders and engage in advocacy. More information can be found on the TRFC webpage at: https://www.edtx.org/get-involved/texas-rural-funders-collaborative.

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