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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CENTRAL APPALACHIA REGIONAL NETWORK RELEASES BROADBAND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

April 8, 2013 – Charleston, WV – Internet access has been identified by the United Nations as a basic human right. And as more everyday tasks and economic activities move online, broadband is no longer a luxury—it’s a public necessity. However, despite public and private efforts to increase broadband access in central Appalachian states, too many communities find that the opportunity to use the Internet to its full potential is limited by lack of network infrastructure, accessibility and affordability. In response, the Central Appalachia Regional Network (CARN) has put forth broadband policy recommendations for the six states CARN serves – Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

These recommendations are available online at www.CARNnet.org and are summarized as follows:

Goal 1: Institutionalize Broadband Priorities in State Government

Goal 2: Provide State Funding for Broadband Investments

Goal 3: Subject Broadband to Regulation by Public Service Commission

Goal 4: Improve Take-up Rates through Digital Literacy Programs and Access to Computers for Moderate and Low-Income Families

CARN members recognize that the region will be left behind if its citizens can’t participate in the digital revolution, and therefore have made it a priority to advocate for policies on the local, state, regional and national level that support and increase the availability of high quality Internet. As Rev. James Patterson, president of the Partnership of African American Churches and CARN member stated, “It is absolutely critical that we make quality affordable broadband available to everyone across Appalachia.”

“In a world that is becoming increasingly ‘flat’ as a result of access to the Internet there is hope that broadband technologies can once and for all level the playing field between rural and urban areas without the need to level the Appalachia mountains,” said report author Paul Miller from the West Virginia Center for Budget and Policy and CARN affiliate member.

In 2011, CARN commissioned a broadband policy scan of the last decade of legislative and public policy adoptions across the six states to review the policy environment in each state and determine how well positioned they are to capture the benefits derived from increased broadband deployment and adoption. The scan provided the foundation on which the policy recommendations were developed.

“Access to broadband is so essential to improving economic prosperity and wellbeing in Appalachia,” stated Mimi Pickering from Appalshop, a Kentucky CARN member assisting with the report. “But we have to look at it as a utility and advocate for state policies that ensure that even the most isolated and least profitable communities will be served.”

CARN members will be sharing the policy recommendations with public officials, public interest advocates and grassroots groups throughout the region to build support for actions to improve broadband access, affordability and adoption.

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Direct Links:

http://www.carnnet.org/docs/Policy%20recommendations_web.pdf

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The Central Appalachia Regional Network was formed as part of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Rural People, Rural Policy Initiative – a multi-year national initiative – based on the premise that “rural America has abundant assets and that the brightest potential for rural America emerges when a critical mass of rural people are stronger, more organized policy actors.” Visit www.CARNnet.org for more information.