



*Growing the Missouri of the Future*

## 2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

A 19-County Northwest Missouri Legislative Educational Event

- **Ensure End-of-the-Road Hi-Speed Internet Through Broadband and Fiber**
- **Revive Relevant Infrastructure Throughout Northwest Missouri**
- **Invest in Sustained Rural Economic and Community Development Strategies**
- **Support Pre-K-12/Higher Education, Innovation, and Career Development for All Ages**
- **Increase Rural Access to Affordable Primary and Mental Health Care**

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Great Northwest Day Priorities Committee is to broaden the circle of input to present a strong united message to our legislators and government officials. The committee has gathered input from community leaders from throughout the region via an online survey, as well as consulting with regional planning and advocacy groups such as the Missouri Coalition of Counties, Northwest Missouri Roundtable of Economic Development, Transportation Advisory Committees, Solid Waste Districts, Area Agency on Aging, Leadership Northwest Missouri, United Way, and others. Feedback was reviewed against the criteria of (1) legislative impact, (2) overarching regional impact, and (3) non-partisan perspective.

The Great Northwest Day Steering Committee, all state legislators, regional media, and other leaders throughout the region and state receive these GNW Day Priority Papers. They are also distributed to all attendees at our Great Northwest Day at the Capitol to be held February 4-5, 2020. To register and learn more, please visit [www.greatnorthwestday.com](http://www.greatnorthwestday.com).

Many thanks to all of the committee members and contributors as well as The Community Foundation of Northwest Missouri's "Maximize NWMO" team for making the online survey platform available for this effort.

Should you have any questions about the choosing of these priorities or the content in these papers, please contact 2020 GNW Day Priorities Committee Chair Christel Gollnick, JUPER Communications, LLC, at 816.588.2730 or [christel@jupercommunications.com](mailto:christel@jupercommunications.com). Further data may also be requested by emailing [together@maximizenwmo.org](mailto:together@maximizenwmo.org).

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# Ensure End-of-the-Road High-Speed Internet Through Broadband and Fiber

Being able to connect to reliable high-speed Internet is being able to communicate and cultivate innovation that can lead to a better educated, healthier, wealthier, and more positive culture. Today, affordable and reliable high-speed Internet access is just as, if not more, important as postal service and electricity was to earlier generations. Rural, suburban, and urban residents and businesses all use the Internet for approximately the same amount of time connecting with the same types of devices each day.<sup>1</sup> In rural areas the increasing use of the Internet-dependent devices in agriculture actually make the need for hi-speed even greater. Ensuring rural residents have the same dependable connections as those living within the city limits of communities is an essential utility for learning and working in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is an economic development, educational attainment, workforce development, healthcare, and overall quality of life priority for northwest Missouri.

## Why is this a legislative priority for NWMO?

- **High-speed connectivity often determines the economic “haves” and “have-nots”** who are positioned to leverage opportunities and improve their quality of life. **Broadband is as essential as electricity.**
- **Growing telemedicine technology** and use is a need in our region to help address growing mental health needs in areas that are underserved by healthcare providers.
- **Our aging population** can live longer in their homes with connectivity to family and social contacts, healthcare provider email, general and patient-specific medical information, remote patient monitoring devices, and video conferencing with general and specialist healthcare professionals.<sup>3</sup>
- **All ages** can connect to a broader range of education resources and opportunities.
- **Our residents involved in agriculture** need high-speed broadband to operate. Smartphone apps, GPS mapping even artificial intelligence (AI) is being utilized to literally grow agribusiness through increase yields.

*While some of our small northwest Missouri communities are in the midst of getting or expanding fiber, many others along with most residents living on state and county roads are still without access to any Internet connection options beyond unreliable cellular service. It is imperative to collaborate with the Federal Communications Commission [FCC] to help implement their aggressive key initiatives<sup>2</sup> designed to distribute resources fairly to all geographic corners of the state. The FCC's “Fixed Broadband Deployment Map” (<https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/#/>) shows many of the gaps in rural areas. However, even this map is not 100% correct as reported by Great Northwest residents in a recent survey conducted.*

## How to help:

- ✓ **Support the proposed budget of \$10M for the state broadband fund.**
- ✓ **Extend the sunset of the state broadband program, which is currently scheduled to expire in 2021, by supporting MO Representative Riggs’ HB 1859 and MO Senator Hegeman’s SB 632.**  
(<https://www.house.mo.gov/BillsMobile.aspx?year=2020&code=R&bill=HB1859> and <https://www.house.mo.gov/BillsMobile.aspx?year=2020&code=R&bill=HB1859>).
- ✓ **Support the creation of a Missouri Department of Rural** to represent rural residents and entities within all other state department strategies and actions. Even our micropolitan and urban communities would benefit as many of their workers, customers, students, and retail taxpayers live in surrounding rural areas.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fcc.gov/general/universal-service-high-cost-areas-connect-america-fund>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fcc.gov/about-fcc/fcc-initiatives/bridging-digital-divide-all-americans>

<sup>3</sup> Foundation for Rural Service and Rural Telephone Finance Cooperative Rural Telecom Educational Series papers (2012).



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# Revive Relevant Infrastructure Throughout Northwest Missouri

Communities with excellent roads and sidewalks, safe bridges, and updated buildings and homes have the best opportunity to thrive. A place that looks great, is safe and welcoming, and is accessible via any mode of modern transportation is essential for fostering growth and opportunity.

### Why is this a legislative priority for NWMO?

- Roadway safety directly impacts the ability of our youth to access education; our workforce to travel to and from their jobs; and, visitors to contribute to our local economy.
- With two Interstates (I-29 and I-35) and Highways 24, 36, 59, 71, 65, 136, and 169 running through Northwest Missouri, we are well positioned as the crossroads for all sorts of over-the-road logistics in the center of North America. However, if the state and county roads and bridges that feed these important crossroads are not safe and well cared for, we are unable to take advantage of the opportunities our location offers.

*"Businesses look at transportation infrastructure when considering whether to create new jobs in our state. Poor and weight restricted bridges add time and cost when delivering product to market. They also add time when first responders are needed and seconds count. We must do better."<sup>1</sup>*

### How to help:

- ✓ **Support the governor's budget to maintain safety of all roads and bridges;** replace where necessary to best aid innovative business growth.
  - Support continued BRO [Off-System Bridge Replacement & Rehabilitation] Funding of the Highway Bridge Program [HBP] within the Department of Transportation's Local Public Agency [LPA] Program. The BRO program provides funding to counties for replacement or rehabilitation of deficient bridges located on roads functionally classified as local or rural. These fall within Governor Parson's Infrastructure Budget.
  - Support innovative funding efforts to expand high-quality replacement of outdated transportation assets. We must continue to invest in our transportation infrastructure until Missouri has a dedicated funding source.
- ✓ **Continue support of the Multi-Purpose Water Fund within the Department of Natural Resources,** specifically for water supply and distribution infrastructure. NWMO has three of the largest water infrastructure projects in Missouri and two of the nation's largest USDA-RD water, all of which require local and state support to complete.
- ✓ **Improve response timeliness and accessibility of flood, drought, and other disaster assistance.** Our most northwestern counties are still suffering from the devastation of 2019 flooding and based on forecasts, are not hopeful that 2020 will be better for them. They need our attention and help!
- ✓ **Support appropriations for the restore inadequate and crumbling infrastructure of our higher education institutions and public service facilities.**
- ✓ **Restore and occupy rural and micropolitan vacant properties: Downtowns and commercial areas** – Ensure continuation of, and expand, Chapter 353 Tax Abatement for redevelopment corporations to include support revitalization efforts.
- ✓ **Build enough quality mid-income housing to retain and attract higher paid jobs and workers.**
- ✓ **Ensure a citizen-engaged, public planning process for all eligible projects.**
- ✓ **Support the creation of a Missouri Department of Rural** to represent rural residents and entities within all other state department strategies and actions. Even our micropolitan and urban communities would benefit as many of their workers, customers, students, and retail taxpayers live in surrounding rural areas.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.semissourian.com/story/2562950.html>



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# Invest in Sustained Rural Economic and Community Development Strategies

Stronger communities are built over time through the success of many different factors coming together. When the investments of all sectors are aligned and collaborating, transformation takes place for the better. Progress related to economic and community development is often only measured by short-term projects and initiatives that serve as band-aids to complex systemic problems requiring root cause treatment and long-term care. We need help that boosts sustained and infinite game progress.

### Why is this a legislative priority for NWMO?

- Our individual residents, local governments, nonprofits, and businesses, **don't have as many resources that urban areas** have to support the work of aligning efforts and investments of local, state, and federal public entities and private groups.
- **Poverty levels in northwest Missouri can be reduced through access to higher-paying jobs.** Those jobs can only be created by supporting and attracting the people who have the innovative ideas and skills for growth.
- People tend to choose to live and work in places **led by people with vision, integrity, and enthusiasm** for building on the shared natural and human-made assets of those places. A positive culture is not only evident in low crime rates and the way communities look. It is most evident in ways that are felt by residents and visitors of all ages. **Supporting people who are employers and who have the potential to be employers in northwest Missouri is a win-win sustainable and profitable strategy.**

*The challenges with our rural economy did not happen overnight and it is going to take some time to turn our population and prosperity decline around. We must invest in our communities, businesses and entrepreneurs now to ensure economic vitality grows well into the next generation. Progress is being made and our region is ready to leverage larger investments to maximize our potential.*

### How to help:

- ✓ **Support the Missouri Department of Economic Development's full proposed budget** for all divisions with particular attention to the Business and Community Solutions Division and the Regional Engagement Division teams working on regional vitality to support and sustain community development.
- ✓ **Support Enhanced Enterprise Zone (EEZ) programs** by clarifying how to extend current and establish new zones.
- ✓ **Ensure well-intended legislation to improve respect and social justice statewide such as the Diversity Plan that is part of the Missouri Works program, does not inadvertently put rural communities at an impossible and unfair disadvantage.** While our region welcomes and appreciates our racial minority populations, we have less than the required 17.2% population for good faith efforts to employ and contract minorities.
- ✓ **Make more loans, grants, and legal structure options (such as B-corps) available that retain and attract younger generations and encourage rural small businesses and innovative entrepreneurs to develop their ideas within their communities.**
- ✓ **Support efforts that make the job of marketing all of northwest Missouri (rural, micropolitan, and urban) easier** by investing in communications strategies that streamline the flow of information about supportive programs and resources available to economic and community developers who are helping businesses and organizations grow
- ✓ **Ensure taxes paid by new businesses and organizations in rural communities benefit the local public entities supporting their presence.**
- ✓ **Support the creation of a Missouri Department of Rural** to represent rural residents and entities within all other state department strategies and actions. Even our micropolitan and urban communities would benefit as many of their workers, customers, and retail taxpayers live in surrounding rural areas.



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# Support PreK-12/Higher Education, Innovation, and Career Development for All Ages

The future of our region depends on an educated and skilled workforce. Educational districts and institutions contributing to the development of Missouri's next generation of citizens, from preschool through multiple postsecondary options such as professional certificate and degree programs, cannot fulfill their mission without your support. We ask our legislators to continue investing in education, workforce development, and leadership development that can move our state forward.

### Why is this a legislative priority for NWMO?

- With technology advancing at an exponentially faster rate every year<sup>1</sup> it isn't surprising that everything from manufacturing to agriculture, health care, sales, and government are finding themselves in new situations that are both exciting opportunities and overwhelming challenges. As a connected society, **we need people of all ages who are prepared with the right skills, and who are ready and willing to work.**
- **Northwest Missouri's neighboring regions within Missouri and in Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska are further along in developing their collective ability to compete in a quickly changing national and global economy.** We need to invest in our people to advance their knowledge and skills as well as increase wages to support those who do have the education and experience necessary to help improve the outlook of the region.
- Access to quality education from birth throughout life along with a clearer understanding of the link between the work of learning and the ability to earn a wage that supports a person's desired quality of life are two focus areas that will lift northwest Missouri.

*Our youth want meaningful and enjoyable work<sup>2</sup> but find it challenging to find internship and apprenticeship opportunities in their small communities and 80% of employers now want entry-level candidates to have real-work experience.<sup>3</sup> Educators in our public schools want to help students as best they can but often find themselves making decisions based on limited funding, strict state standards, and a tense relationship with their local community of taxpayers. It is a triangle that must find some common ground to advance collectively.*

*According to the National Education Cost Model (NECM), Missouri ranks in the bottom fifth of states in the U.S. providing funding adequate to achieve national average test scores.<sup>4</sup> While scores are not the only measure of effectiveness, our state is clearly behind.*

### How to help:

- ✓ **Serve the students of northwest Missouri with a fully funded education formula for all levels; increase core funding for higher education connected to workforce development.**
- ✓ **Increase funding of S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) education programs for all ages.** All five of these areas have proven to improve the foundational brain architecture necessary for solving complex challenges.
- ✓ **Raise educator salaries to help retain quality professionals and reduce interruptions in the essential supportive relationships that are built in schools and other learning environments starting from high quality early childhood development programs through higher education.**
- ✓ **Incentivize stronger business and school relationships** from pre-K to post-secondary ed to ensure students are learning the skills needed in the workplace.
- ✓ **Celebrate and support educational "wins" achieved by youth and adults in your communities.**
- ✓ **Support the creation of a Missouri Department of Rural** to represent rural residents and entities within all other state department strategies and actions. Even our micropolitan and urban communities would benefit as many of their workers, customers, students, and retail taxpayers live in surrounding rural areas.

<sup>1</sup> Friedman, Thomas L. *Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations*, November 2016, Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

<sup>2</sup> Teresa Byington, Ph.D., (2017) "Millennials in the Workplace: Understanding Generational Differences," University of Nevada Cooperative Extension; Wong, M., Gardine, E., Lan W. and Coulon, L. (2008) "Generational difference in personality and motivation: do they exist and what are the implications for the workplace?" *Journal of Managerial Psychology* (JMP), Vol. 23, Issue. 8, pp. 878-890, © Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Australia.

<sup>3</sup> <https://theundercoverrecruiter.com/skills-experience-degree/>; [www.mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/UXC001%20Voice%20of%20the%20Graduate%20v7.pdf](http://www.mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/UXC001%20Voice%20of%20the%20Graduate%20v7.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://schoolfinancedata.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SFID\\_AnnualReport\\_2019.pdf](http://schoolfinancedata.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SFID_AnnualReport_2019.pdf)

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### Increase Rural Access to Affordable Primary and Mental Health Care

The current system in our country and Missouri, specifically, is complex and a tragic cycle for many rural residents. There are fewer insurers charging higher rates in rural areas.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, rural residents who are already earning lower wages for similar work that is better compensated in urban areas are forced to go without insurance or the money to pay out-of-pocket. The higher percentage of uninsured and underinsured along with decreased reimbursements has a negative effect on the ability of healthcare providers to keep their doors open. The challenges are much greater than debating whether to expand an insurance program. By working together and focusing on the tangible actions that can improve lives and reduce long-term costs we can help residents and providers.

#### Why is this a legislative priority for NWMO?

Increasing access to quality affordable primary care and treating mental health the same as any other area of health care can help:

- **Prevent more serious – and costly - physical and mental health problems from developing.**
- **Reduce substance abuse and crime.**
- **Encourage and educate** residents to make healthier life choices.
- **Decrease suicide rates;** particularly those caused by overdose.<sup>1</sup>
- **Keep and attract more healthcare professionals in and to our communities** who also play important leadership roles beyond patient care. National statistics tell us **there are only 55 primary care physicians and 30 specialists per 100,000 rural residents compared to 79 and 263 respectively per 100,000 urban residents.**<sup>1</sup>

*"Easy access to affordable healthcare affects everyone. The issues that are facing us are enormous, but I know for a fact that by coordinating our efforts we can accomplish much more together than alone."*

– Rodney Hummer, RN BSN, Director of Development and Community Engagement, Northwest Health Services

*"As a Missouri rural hospital CEO and member of the Missouri Hospital Association Board, I work each day to assure that our rural patients and families have not only access to care but the range of services needed to care for their needs. As difficult as this can be in urban environments, it is extremely difficult in a rural setting. Expense to provide care increases each year, yet reimbursement continues to decrease. I am fearful that we do not have a sustainable model for access and medical services for these great rural citizens. Your attention to these inequities is very much appreciated."*

– Carroll County Memorial Hospital CEO Jeff Tindle

#### How to help:

- ✓ **Support reasonable changes to Medicaid that better provide prevention and early intervention through primary care and mental health care.** While we understand across-the-board expansion is not possible at this time, expanding coverage in these key areas will generate significant savings by reducing the development of more advanced illnesses requiring expensive treatments. Also, decreasing the churn rate of rural residents transitioning back and forth between eligibility and ineligibility for coverage, which is a costly process for state agencies that often leaves poor and near-poor residents without coverage and care<sup>1</sup>, would help improve resident health.
- ✓ **Provide a pathway for APRNs to practice independently, and support quicker processing of credentials for healthcare professionals** to help our rural area attract more providers from other states to our region.
- ✓ **Support the passage of the statewide Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP).** Missouri is the only state without one and the chance for inadvertent overdosing by mixing opioids with other prescriptions is causing deaths. Helping healthcare providers and pharmacists to securely share patient information will save lives and reduce costs.
- ✓ **Support the creation of a Missouri Department of Rural** to represent rural residents and entities within all other state department strategies and actions. Even our micropolitan and urban communities would benefit as many of their workers, customers, students, and retail taxpayers live in surrounding rural areas.

<sup>1</sup> "Rural Health Insurance Market Challenges," National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services, August 2018, <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/advisory-committees/rural/publications/2018-Rural-Health-Insurance-Market-Challenges.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kansascity.com/news/politics-government/article229819274.html>