RE-2 Employee Post Travel Disclosure of Travel Expenses

Date/Time Stamp

Post Travel Filing Instructions: Complete this form within **30 days** of returning from travel. Submit all forms to the Office of Public Records in 144 Hart Building.**This form is a public disclosure. The form and all attachments will be made publicly available.**

Certification:*In compliance with the Regulations Governing Privately Sponsored Travel, Senate Rule 35, and the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, I certify that I accepted the following gift of privately sponsored travel:*

Private Sponsor(s):
Foundation for Rural Service

Travel Dates:
08/11/2026 to 08/14/2026

Name of accompanying family member (if any):

Relationship to Traveler:

Expenses

Transportation Expenses	Lodging Expenses	Meals Expenses	Other Expenses (Amount & Description)
$834.13	$330.00	$223.00	$0.00

I also certify that attached to this form are all required documents for post travel disclosure, including:

- **The final Employee Pre-Travel Authorization** (Form RE-1)
- The final **Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form** with all attachments
- The final invitation
- The final approved itinerary

Finally, I certify that all trip information reflected in the attachments above accurately reflects the travel that I accepted. If there were any changes to the trip after I received approval from the Committee, the changes are described in ATTACHMENT 1.

August 20, 2026
Date

Jasmine Caruthers
Printed Name of Traveler


Signature of Traveler

TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISING MEMBER/OFFICER

I have made a determination that the expenses set out above in connections with travel described in the Employee Pre-Travel Authorization form, are necessary transportation, lodging, and related expenses as defined in Rule 35.

8/20/2026
Date


Signature of Supervising Senator/Officer

ATTACHMENT 1 – CHANGES FROM APPROVED PRE-TRAVEL

Note: Material changes to a trip that occur after the Committee has issued an approval letter may invalidate the Committee's approval. Please contact the Committee with any questions regarding changes to an approved trip.

Were there any changes to the pre-approved travel expenses? (Transportation, Meals, Lodging, Other)?

○ Yes ☑ No

Expense Change	Revised Amount	Explanation
There were no changes to pre-approved travel expenses.		

Were there any changes to the pre-approved itinerary?

○ Yes ☑ No

Explanation: There were no changes to the pre-approved itinerary.

Were there any additional changes to the pre-approved trip?

○ Yes ☑ No

Explanation: There were no additional changes to the pre-approved trip.

Dear Jasmine,

Want a firsthand look at how federal broadband policy is playing out on the ground in rural America?

The Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) invites you to join us in August for our **2026 Congressional Broadband Tour** through **South Dakota and Iowa**, with potential stops in **Minnesota and Nebraska**, to explore how broadband investment is strengthening rural communities and where challenges remain. This is a unique opportunity to see real-world broadband deployment, meet the providers doing the work, and hear directly from the people and communities impacted by federal programs.

During the tour, participants will visit community-based rural broadband providers, fiber construction and deployment sites, broadband-enabled farms, telehealth and rural healthcare facilities, business and workforce hubs, and tribal lands. You will gain insight into broadband affordability, permitting and pole attachment challenges, workforce needs, sustainability of federal programs, and the role broadband plays in supporting education, agriculture, public safety, commerce, and rural economic development while experiencing one of the most beautiful regions of the country. A detailed itinerary will be available in the coming weeks.

Details:

- Travel dates: Tuesday, August 11 – Friday, August 14; Round Trip from Washington, DC, to Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

- Cost and Ethics Compliance: The trip includes airfare, lodging, ground transportation, and meals (within federal *per diem* rates). The tour will comply fully with House and Senate ethics rules governing privately sponsored travel for congressional staff.

Space is Limited! Participation is limited to 20 staff members and will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. A firm commitment will be needed by early July, but staff who are interested are encouraged to reserve a spot now. A waitlist will also be maintained. To reserve a space or request additional information, please contact: Pam Becker at pbecker@frs.org or 703-346-0817.

About the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS): FRS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Arlington, Virginia, and the philanthropic arm of NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association. FRS works to sustain and enhance rural quality of life by increasing understanding of rural issues and supporting rural communities through scholarships, grants, and educational programs. To view highlights from past FRS Congressional Broadband Tours visit: https://www.frs.org/programs/congressional-broadband-tour.

Thank you for your interest. I hope you'll join us for this valuable opportunity to see rural broadband in action and bring those insights back to the policy conversation on Capitol Hill.

Pam Becker, CFRE
Executive Director
Foundation for Rural Service
(703) 351-2044 direct | (703) 346-0817 mobile
4121 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 1000 | Arlington, VA 22203
www.frs.org



This electronic message, including attachments, may include information that is confidential, proprietary and/or legally privileged. It is intended solely for the use of the individual(s) named as recipients in the message. Any unauthorized use, disclosure, copying or distribution is prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient or have received this e-mail in error, please contact the sender by replying to the e-mail and delete all copies of the original message. If you no longer wish to receive e-mail from this account, please reply to this message with the word "remove" in the subject line.

RE-1 Employee Pre-Travel Authorization

Date/Time Stamp

Pre-Travel Filing Instructions: Complete and submit this form at least 30 days prior to the travel departure date to the **Select Committee on Ethics in SH-220.** Incomplete and late travel submissions will **not** be considered or approved.

Name of Traveler:
JASMINE CARUTHERS

Employing Office/Committee:
GALLEGO, RUBEN

Private Sponsor(s):
Foundation for Rural Service

Destination(s):
Flandreau, South Dakota Le Mars, Iowa Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Travel Dates:
08/11/2026 to 08/14/2026
NOTE: If you plan to extend the trip for any reason you **must** notify the Committee.

Explain how this trip is specifically connected to the traveler's official or representational duties.

I serve as Counsel for my office, where I handle technology and broadband policy issues. This trip is focused on the geographic and financial challenges of delivering reliable broadband service to remote rural communities—an issue that is especially relevant to Arizona, where many of our constituents live in rural and Tribal areas. As I continue to deepen my understanding of these challenges, this opportunity will provide valuable insights and points of comparison that will help inform my work and better advise my boss on broadband policy.

Do you have an accompanying family member or spouse on this trip?
No

Name and Relationship to Traveler:
N/A

I certify that the information contained in this form is true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge.

July 13, 2026
Date

Signature of Employee

TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISING MEMBER/OFFICER
(President of the Senate, Secretary of the Senate, Sergeant at Arms, Secretary for the Majority, Secretary for the Minority, and Chaplain)

I
U.S. Senator Ruben Gallego
(Print Senator's/Officer's Name)

hereby authorize
Jasmine Caruthers
(Print Traveler's Name)

an employee under my direct supervision, to accept payment or reimbursement for necessary transportation, lodging, and related expenses for travel to the event described above. I have determined that this travel is in connection with his or her duties as a Senate employee or an officeholder, and will not create the appearance that he or she is using public office for private gain.

I have also determined that the attendance of the employee's spouse or child is appropriate to assist in the representation of the Senate.

☑ (signify "yes" by checking box)

July 14, 2026

Date

Signature of Supervising Senator/Officer

Foundation for Rural Service: 2026 Congressional Broadband Tour -- SD, MN, IA and NE

Jasmine Caruthers

Title:
None

Employing Office/Committee:
GALLEGO, RUBEN

Duty Station:
WASHINGTON,DC

Destination(s):

Flandreau, South Dakota
Le Mars, Iowa
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Explain how this trip is specifically connected to the traveler's official or representational duties:

I serve as Counsel for my office, where I handle technology and broadband policy issues. This trip is focused on the geographic and financial challenges of delivering reliable broadband service to remote rural communities—an issue that is especially relevant to Arizona, where many of our constituents live in rural and Tribal areas. As I continue to deepen my understanding of these challenges, this opportunity will provide valuable insights and points of comparison that will help inform my work and better advise my boss on broadband policy.

Name of accompanying family member (if any):
Not Entered

Name and Relationship to Traveler:
None

Organization Information

Organization Name
Foundation for Rural Service

Is your organization classified as a §501(c)(3)?
☑ Yes ○ No

§501(c)(3) Organization Type
Public Charity

Address
4121 Wilson Boulevard

Address 2 (Optional)
Suite 1000

City, State Zip
Arlington, Virginia 22203 United States

Phone Number
703-346-0817

Organization URL
frs.org

History of Congressional Travel

FRS has sponsored similar trips for congressional staff to New York (2014), Kentucky/Tennessee (2015), Wyoming (2016), South Dakota (2017), West Virginia (2018), Montana (2021), Vermont (2022), Minnesota/North Dakota (2023), Washington/Oregon (2024), and New Mexico (2025).

Educational Activities

FRS seeks to sustain and enhance the quality of life in rural America by advancing an understanding of rural issues. Through scholarships, grants, and a variety of educational activities, FRS focuses on educating rural youth, encouraging community development, and introducing policy makers and their staff to challenges unique to rural communities.

Lobbyist and Foreign Agent Registration Information

Lobbyist Registration Status: *I certify that the sponsor is not a federally registered lobbyist and does not retain or employ a federally registered lobbyists.*

Foreign Agent Registration Status: *I certify that the sponsor is not an agent of a foreign principal and do not retain or employ an agent of a foreign principal.*

Foreign Government Involvement

Foreign Agent Registration Status:

- ✓ I certify that the sponsor is not a foreign government.
- ✓ I certify that the sponsor is not an entity that is owned or operated by a foreign government.
- ✓ I certify that the sponsor does not receive funding from a foreign government.

Comments

None Entered

Signature Page

The signature page is below.

Purpose and Details

Provide a brief description of the trip.

Participants will travel throughout the four-corner area of South Dakota-Minnesota-Iowa-Nebraska to visit local broadband providers and users, and learn about the geographic and financial challenges of providing rural broadband services.

Explain how the purpose of the trip relates to your organization's mission.

The mission of FRS is to sustain and enhance the quality of life in rural America. FRS educates the public on the benefits and uses of rural broadband. The trip will showcase both the challenges and the benefits of providing broadband in rural communities.

Is your organization the only sponsor for this trip?

- [x] Yes
- [ ] No

Grantmaking Organizations (Optional)

There are no grantmaking organizations.

With or Without Regard for Congressional Participation

The trip is arranged or organized specifically with regard to congressional participation.

Lobbyist/Foreign Agent Involvement in Planning, Organizing, Requesting or Arranging

- [x] The trip will not in any part be planned, organized, requested, or arranged by a registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principal, other than de minimis involvement.

Lobbyist/Foreign Agent Financing

- [x] The trip will not be financed in any part by a registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principal.
- [x] No funds or in-kind contributions were earmarked directly or indirectly for the purpose of financing this specific trip from a registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principal or from a private entity that retains or employs one or more registered lobbyists or agents of a foreign principal.

Lobbyist/Foreign Agent Accompaniment

Complete if all sponsors are §501(c)(3) organizations

- [x] The trip is limited to three days (for trips inside the continental United States) or seven days (for trips outside the continental United States), and no lobbyist or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee at any point throughout the trip
- [ ] The trip is limited to a one-day event (exclusive of travel time and **one** overnight stay) and no registered lobbyists or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee on any segment of the trip
- [ ] The trip is limited to a one-day event (exclusive of travel time and **two** overnight stays) and no registered lobbyists or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee on any segment of the trip

Complete if any of the sponsors is not a §501(c)(3) organizations.

- [ ] The trip is limited to three days (for trips inside the continental United States) or seven days (for trips outside the continental United States), and no lobbyist or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee at any point throughout the trip
- [ ] The trip is limited to a one-day event (exclusive of travel time and **one** overnight stay) and no registered lobbyists or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee on any segment of the trip
- [ ] The trip is limited to a one-day event (exclusive of travel time and **two** overnight stays) and no registered lobbyists or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee on any segment of the trip

Certification of No Recreational Activity and No Alcohol

- Travel expenses paid for will not include expenditures for recreational activities.
- Travel expenses paid for will not include expenditures for alcohol, except as permitted by the Regulations Governing Privately Sponsored Travel.

Invitees

Members and staff from the House of Representatives **will** receive invitations.

The list of invitees is below.

Travel Details

Trip Start Date/Time:	Trip End Date/Time:
08/11/2026 @ 07:35 AM	08/14/2026 @ 03:59 PM

Will the traveler be accompanied by a family member for whom the sponsor will pay travel expenses?

○ Yes ● No

Itinerary

The itinerary is below.

Transportation (Per Member/Officer/Employee: $834.13 | Accompanying Family Member: $0.00)

Transportation Type	Class	Amount
Airfare	Coach	$634.13
Note Round trip airfare from DCA to FSD (Sioux Falls, SD)		
Ground Transportation	Coach	$200.00
Note Chartered Coach bus while on the ground, between stops.		

Lodging (Per Member/Officer/Employee: $330.00)

Check-In	Check-Out	Facility	City	State	Country	Nights	Cost/Night	Cost Exceed Per Diem
08/11/2026	08/12/2026	Royal River Hotel	Flandreau	South Dakota	United States	1	$110.00	No
08/12/2026	08/13/2026	Holiday Inn Express	Le Mars	Iowa	United States	1	$110.00	No
08/13/2026	08/14/2026	Holiday Inn	Sioux Falls	South Dakota	United States	1	$110.00	No

Meals (Per Member/Officer/Employee: $223.00)

Date	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Incidentals	Total	City	State	Country	Cost Exceeds Per Diem
08/11/2026	$0.00	$19.00	$28.00	$0.00	**$47.00**	Sioux Falls and Flandreau	South Dakota	United States	No
08/12/2026	$16.00	$19.00	$28.00	$5.00	**$68.00**	Luverne and Remsen	Iowa	United States	No
08/13/2026	$16.00	$19.00	$28.00	$5.00	**$68.00**	Jackson, NE and Lennox	South Dakota	United States	No

Date	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Incidentals	Total	City	State	Country	Cost Exceeds Per Diem
08/14/2026	$16.00	$19.00	$0.00	$5.00	**$40.00**	Sioux Falls	South Dakota	United States	No

Reasonable Miscellaneous Expenses (Per Member/Officer/Employee: $0.00)

Expense Type	Amount	Notes
There are no miscellaneous expenses.		

Additional Attachments

Document Name
There are no additional attachments.

PRIVATELY SPONSORED TRAVEL

SPONSOR SIGNATURE PAGE

I hereby certify that the information submitted in connection with the trip listed below is true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Trip Name: 2026 FRS Congressional Broadband Tour

Travel Date(s): August 11-14, 2026

Travel Destination(s): Sioux Falls and Flandreau SD; LeMars, IA; and Hartington, N

Sponsor: Foundation for Rural Service

Pamela Becker — *(printed name of sponsor representative)*

Executive Director — *(title)*

Pamela Becker — *(signature of sponsor representative)*

July 9, 2026 — *(date)*

Senate staff invited to the 2026 FRS Congressional Broadband Tour

First Name	Last Name	Title	Employer	Email
Bennett	Abrams	Legislative Assistant	Senator Elissa Slotkin	bennett_abrams@slotkin.senate.gov
Justin	Adams	Legislative Correspondent/Research Assistant	Senator Eric Schmitt	justin_adams@schmitt.senate.gov
Bryson	Albert	Legislative Assistant	Senator John Cornyn	bryson_albert@cornyn.senate.gov
Hannah	Albert	Legislative Assistant	Senator Patty Murray	hannah_albert@murray.senate.gov
Darryl	Alexander	Policy Adviser	Senator Peter Welch	darryl_alexander@welch.senate.gov
Bryan	Allen	Senior Adviser, Energy Policy	Senator Bill Cassidy	bryan_allen@cassidy.senate.gov
Jacky	Alvarado	Legislative Assistant	Senator Ben Ray LujÃ¡n	jacky_alvarado@lujan.senate.gov
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Karl	Anderson	Senior Professional Staff Member	Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee	karl_anderson@ag.senate.gov
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Collin	Anderson	Senior Policy Adviser	Senator Richard Blumenthal	collin_anderson@blumenthal.senate.gov
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Erica	Andeweg	Senior Policy Adviser	Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Telecommu	erica_andeweg@fischer.senate.gov
Nathan	Anonick	Legislative Counsel Professional Staff Member/Counsel	Senator John Boozman	nathan_anonick@ag.senate.gov
Richard	Anthony	Legislative Assistant	Senator Lisa Blunt Rochester	richard_anthony@bluntrochester.senate.gov
Garrett	Arbuckle	Legislative Assistant	Senator Chuck Grassley	garrett_arbuckle@grassley.senate.gov
Kirk	Arner	Telecommunications Counsel	Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee	kirk_arner@commerce.senate.gov
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Charlie	Cahill	Legislative Correspondent	Senator Tom Cotton	charles_cahill@cotton.senate.gov
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Will	Clark	Legislative Assistant	Senator Mitch McConnell	will_clark@mcconnell.senate.gov
Ursula	Clausing	Tax and Economic Policy Adviser	Senator Maggie Hassan	ursula_clausing@hassan.senate.gov
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Megan	Dapper	Legislative Assistant	Senator Maria Cantwell	megan_dapper@cantwell.senate.gov
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Dimitri	DeChurch-Silva	Associate Counsel	Senate Judiciary Committee	dimitri_dechurch-silva@judiciary-dem.senate.gov
Lauren	Denham	Legislative Correspondent	Senator Patty Murray	lauren_denham@murray.senate.gov
Cate	DePonte	Legislative Correspondent	Senator Peter Welch	cate_deponte@welch.senate.gov
Janelle	DiLuccia	Policy Adviser	Senator Jeanne Shaheen	janelle_diluccia@shaheen.senate.gov
Andrew	Downing	Senior Legislative Assistant	Senator Tim Sheehy	andrew_downing@sheehy.senate.gov
Benjamin	Easter	Legislative Assistant	Senator Ted Budd	benjamin_easter@budd.senate.gov
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Patrick	Eckroth	Appropriations Director	Senator Maria Cantwell	patrick_eckroth@cantwell.senate.gov
Jake	Egler	Natural Resources and Judiciary Counsel/Natural Resources Direct	Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee	jacob_egler@wyden.senate.gov
Sara	Eisemann	Policy Adviser	Senator Jon Ossoff	sara_eisemann@ossoff.senate.gov
John	Erzen	Senior Policy Adviser	Senator Angela Alsobrooks	john_erzen@alsobrooks.senate.gov
Mary	Evans	Legislative Assistant	Senator Mike Lee	mary_evans@lee.senate.gov
Melanie	Ezrin	Legislative Aide	Senator Tammy Baldwin	melanie_ezrin@baldwin.senate.gov
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Kay	Fallon	Legislative Fellow	Senator Mark Warner	kathleen_fallon@warner.senate.gov
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Katherine	Goldstuck	Legislative Correspondent	Senator Angus King	katherine_goldstuck@king.senate.gov
Alejandro	Gomez	Legislative Aide	Senator Alex Padilla	alejandro_gomez@padilla.senate.gov

Senate staff invited to the 2026 FRS Congressional Broadband Tour

First Name	Last Name	Title	Employer	Email
Harley	Gonsalves	Legislative Correspondent	Senator Brian Schatz	harley_gonsalves@schatz.senate.gov
Scott	Graber	Chief Counsel Professional Staff Member	Senate Budget Committee	scott_graber@lgraham.senate.gov
Christian	Graf	Senior Policy Adviser	Senator Gary Peters	christian_graf@peters.senate.gov
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Cecily	Hahn	Senior Legislative Counsel	Senator Tammy Baldwin	cecily_hahn@baldwin.senate.gov
Coti-Lynne	Haia	Chief of Staff	Senator Mazie Hirono	coti_haia@hirono.senate.gov
Daniel	Hale	Policy Adviser	Senator Marsha Blackburn	daniel_hale@blackburn.senate.gov
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Michael	Harris	Policy Adviser	Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Fisheries, Water and '	michael_harris@schiff.senate.gov
Luke	Harris	Legislative Assistant	Senator Bill Hagerty	luke_harris@hagerty.senate.gov
Jonas	Hart	Legislative Aide	Senator Jerry Moran	jonas_hart@moran.senate.gov
Olin	Hartkopf	Policy Adviser	Senator Angus King	olin_hartkopf@king.senate.gov
Jamari	Hartley	Legislative Assistant	Senator Jon Husted	jamari_hartley@husted.senate.gov
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FOUNDATION FOR RURAL SERVICE

FRS Congressional Broadband Tour
South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska
August 11-14, 2026

The Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) is a 501c3 non-profit dedicated to enhancing quality of life in America by promoting a better understanding of rural issues. The vision of FRS is to harness the power of the rural communications industry to enrich lives in America.

The purpose of this trip is to educate Capitol Hill staff on the geographic and financial challenges of providing robust broadband service to remote rural areas, as well as to highlight the role rural telecom companies play in providing these essential services that support education, commercial activity, agriculture, health, and public safety. Attendees will meet with a range of small, rural telecommunications companies in the selected areas as well as companies that rely on broadband to provide essential services to their communities. The group will also visit rural community leaders and discuss ways in which the states have been enhanced by broadband applications. Drive times will provide an opportunity for educational sessions on the bus, as well as illustrate the difficulty of serving “last mile” areas in rural states.

No registered federal lobbyists will attend this trip. All expenses will be paid in full by the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) and will be subject to the daily per diem allowances for Senate and House employees—all meals, lodging, and transportation for staffers will be covered by FRS within these allowance rates. There will be at least 6.5 hours of educational content each day.

ITINERARY

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2026

7:35 a.m.	**Depart Reagan National Airport (DCA)** to Chicago, IL (ORD) AA#2304
11:36 a.m.	**Arrive Sioux Falls, SD** (FSD) on AA4991
Noon - 12:15 p.m.	**Travel by bus to** Great Shots 2505 West Benson Road Sioux Falls, SD 57107

12:15 - 1:15 p.m. **Welcome, lunch and Broadband 101 briefing –** A basic primer to bring attendees up to speed on basic broadband and telecommunications technology, funding options, challenges and terminology.

Speakers:

- **Ross Petrick,** CEO, Alliance Communications Cooperative
- **Ryan Punt,** CEO**,** SDN Communications
- **Chad Mutziger,** CEO, Midstate Communications, and member of the FRS Board of Directors
- **Pam Becker,** Executive Director, Foundation for Rural Service

1:15 – 1:30 p.m. **Travel to SDN datacenter**
5300 N La Mesa Drive
Sioux Falls, SD

1:30 – 2:15 p.m. **Tour SDN Datacenter** -- Owned by SDN Communications, the SDN Communications Data Center serves as a colocation facility, data center operations, disaster recovery site and point of presence. Built with 12-inch-thick concrete walls, it's designed to withstand extreme weather conditions, ensuring a resilient infrastructure and redundant utility operations.

SDN Communications is the premier business-to-business fiber internet service provider in South Dakota and southwestern Minnesota. Established in 1989, the 17 owner companies serve more than 90% of South Dakota's geography. The network is made up of more than 50,000 miles of fiber in eight states, including South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado.

Speakers:

- **Ryan Punt,** CEO**,** SDN Communications
- **Chad Mutziger,** CEO, Midstate Communications, and member of the FRS Board of Directors

2:15 – 3:15 p.m. **Travel to Madison Cyber Labs**
Dakota State University
820 N Washington Ave.
Madison, SD 57042

3:15 – 4:30 p.m. **Tour Madison Cyber Labs**. Recognized for technology and cybersecurity education, Dakota State University is a public, four-year university in Madison, SD, offering on-campus and online programs in humanities, sciences, business, and education. Undergraduate research at the Madison Cyber Labs – or MadLabs -- primarily focuses on projects that explore and advance technology application, information and quality assurance, adverse event planning for businesses, economic growth, and

policy improvement across multiple disciplines and fields. Other focus areas include cybersecurity, digital forensics, cyber defense, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning, reverse engineering, and malicious digital artifacts. MadLabs also fosters partnerships with public and private sectors, to cultivate ideas and transform their research to make a difference in the world.

Speaker:

- **Mike Waldner,** Director of Municipal Cybersecurity Grant Program, Research and Economic Development at Dakota State University

4:30 - 5:15 p.m. **Travel to Royal River Casino and Hotel**
607 S Veterans Street
Flandreau, SD 57028

5:30 -7:30 p.m. **Dinner and discussion about providing broadband service to tribal lands** -- Valley FiberCom traces its roots back to 1952, when residents formed a cooperative to secure federal REA funding to bring telephone service to their community. The company evolved into a 100% fiber, multi-service provider serving rural South Dakota for over seven decades. As a part of Valley FiberCom's expansion, it partnered with the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe to bring needed broadband to tribal residences.

Guests and Speakers:

- **Jeff Symens**, CEO, General Manager, Valley FiberCom
- **Kaye Vandervorst,** Marketing and Sales Manager, Valley FiberCom
- **Kara Semmler**, Executive Director, SD Telecommunications Association

WEDNESDAY, August 12

8:00 a.m. Breakfast at hotel

8:30 – 10:30 a.m. **Tour Flandreau Santee Sioux Reservation** -- The Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe is comprised primarily of descendants of "Mdewakantonwan", a member of the Isanti division of the Great Sioux Nation, and refer to themselves as Dakota, which means friend or ally. The Flandreau Santee Sioux Indian Reservation is 2,500 acres of land located along and near the Big Sioux River in Moody County, South Dakota, in a region known as the Prairie Coteau, which consists primarily of undulating or gently rolling land. In 1934, the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe was formally organized and recognized under the authority of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe uses Valley FiberCom broadband to connect tribal members with essential services, strengthen public

safety and government operations, and expand education, health care, and economic opportunities made possible by reliable rural broadband.

Speakers:

- **Jeff Symens, CEO,** General Manager, Valley FiberCom
- **Tyler Crosby,** Chief Information Officer, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe

10:30 – 11:00 a.m. **Travel to Easy Street Gas Station**
(to pick up escort to installation location)
587 State Highway 30
Lake Wilson, MN 56151

11:00 – 11:30 a.m. **Visit fiber installation project** underway by Woodstock Telephone Company, an independently owned telecommunications company. Woodstock Communications installed Minnesota's first fully underground telephone exchange in 1959 and now operates Southwest Minnesota's only fiber-to-home network.

The fiber installation project is in the small town of Lake Wilson, population 254. Most of the main fiber line throughout town is completed and the final stage is burying all the fiber drops to the homes, as well as splicing, testing, and turning up first customers to multi-gig services including broadband, managed services such as Wi-Fi, parental controls, business and home telephone services, video options, and mobile cellular plans.

Speakers:

- **Terry Nelson,** General Manager, Woodstock Telephone Company
- **Brent Christensen**, CEO, Minnesota Telecom Alliance

11:30 – 12:10 p.m. Travel to Pizza Ranch
110 E Main Street
Luverne, MN 56156

12:10 – 1:00 p.m. Eat lunch

1:00 - 1:45 p.m. Travel to Hull, IA
1135 Main Street
Hull IA 51239

1:45 – 2:15 p.m. **Visit Premier fiber installation project** -- Premier is currently undergoing a full undergrounding of the old coax network and replacing it with a 100% fiber network. H&D Underground is the local contractor who is performing this work for Premier. Residential fiber install includes boring and vibrating plows.

Speakers:

- **Terry Hotzler,** Owner H&D Underground
- **Ryan Boone,** CEO, Premier Communications

2:15 – 2:30 p.m. Travel to Dordt University
Agriculture Stewardship Center
700 7th Street NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1606

2:30 – 3:30 p.m. **Tour Agriculture Stewardship Center (ASC)** a 200-acre working research farm and laboratory owned by Dordt University in Sioux Center, Iowa. It provides agriculture and environmental science students with hands-on learning in livestock management, crop production, and sustainable creation care. Students in agriculture, biology, and environmental studies conduct group research projects on a diverse array of topics. The tour will also include a preview of the high-tech precision agriculture equipment that is more computer than equipment and a discussion about today's approach to agriculture and Iowa's reliance on modernizing the industry.

Speakers:

- **Tim Desink,** Regional Manager, Agri-Vision Precision Equipment
- **Matt Schuiteman**, Member, Iowa Farm Bureau Board
- **Ryan Boone,** CEO, Premier Communications

3:30 – 3:45 p.m. **Travel to Premier Communications**
339 1st Avenue NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250

3:45 – 5:00 p.m. **Tour and demonstration of fiber splicing** -- Premier Communications serves more than thirty communities in northwest Iowa and is one of Iowa's largest independent telephone companies. Providing internet through fiber-to-the-home connections, Premier is a leader in northwest Iowa's business and economic development community. Premier also serves as the Rural Development Loan and Grant recipient to numerous small businesses in their service territory. Premier will demonstrate fiber splicing with a hands-on demonstration of how fiber is cut, cleaned, and re-attached strand by strand.

Speakers:

- **Craig Wenande,** Mainline Plant Supervisor, Premier Communications
- **Ryan Boone**, CEO, Premier Communications

5:00 – 5:45 p.m. **Travel to Golden Pheasant Steak House**
44028 IA-3
Remsen IA 51050

6:00 – 8:00 p.m. **Discussion about various federal and state loan programs** and how Iowa broadband companies have used them to impact community development**.** Robust rural broadband services allow individuals to work remotely, telecommute, or be employed by companies in different states. Many companies themselves invest in the communities they serve through grants, pass through loans, and by encouraging employees to serve on local boards and commissions. Iowa broadband companies have leveraged USDA's Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program, Iowa Area Development Group's Ripple Effect Grants, and numerous others to grow Iowa's rural economy.

Speakers:

- **Mike Sexton,** State Director of Iowa Rural Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- **Dave Duncan,** CEO, Iowa Communications Alliance
- **Kristine Mohing,** General Manager**,** WesTel Systems
- **Robin Jennes,** Operations Manager**,** WesTel Systems

8:00 – 8:15 p.m. Travel to Wells Visitor Center and Ice Cream Parlor
115 Central Ave NE
Le Mars, IA 51031

8:15 – 9:00 p.m. Ice cream stop at Blue Bunny (participants to purchase their own ice cream)

9:00 – 9:05 p.m. **Travel to Holiday Inn Express**
1285 Sleepy Eye Drive
Le Mars, IA 51031

THURSDAY, August 13

8:00--8:30 a.m. Breakfast at hotel in Iowa

8:30 – 8:45 a.m. **Travel to Schroeder Pork**
2085 Polk Ave
Remsen, IA

8:45 – 9:45 a.m. **Tour Schroeder Pork** -- The Schroeders produce 50,000 pigs annually as part of a wean-to-finish operation for Schroeder Pork. They also farm 900 acres of corn and soybeans with their sons, Bryan and Camden. Remote monitoring of the farm and operation of solar fields is made possible by broadband service provided by WestTel Systems.

Locally based and family owned since 1926, WesTel Systems provides a variety of fiber internet, TV, and phone services to rural communities in Iowa.

Speakers:

- **Dean Schroeder,** owner, Schroeder Pork
- **Linda Schroeder,** Owner, Schroeder Pork
- **Kristine Mohning,** General Manager**,** WestTel Systems
- **Kyle Gengler,** Technician**,** WesTel Systems

9:45 – 10:45 a.m. Travel to Siouxland Ethanol
1501 Knox Blvd,
Jackson, NE 68743

10:45 – 11:45 a.m. **Tour Siouxland Ethanol** -- operational since 2007, this facility turns locally grown corn into 100 million gallons of renewable fuel each year. Northeast Nebraska Telephone Company provides the broadband service necessary for operations.

In 2003, local leaders established the Dakota County Economic Development Committee, which was the impetus for Siouxland Ethanol, LLC. Project leaders contacted seed investors, who contributed $1 million to fund a feasibility study and corn origination study. The committee knew the area's strong transportation system (including rail and hard-surface roads), reliable and cost-effective utilities, groundwater and discharge water sources, and abundant corn available in and around Dakota County could contribute to a successful ethanol plant.

Siouxland Ethanol was formed as a limited liability company in Nebraska in August 2004 and an equity drive quickly raised $36 million. In addition to the equity drive, Siouxland Ethanol also used several economic development incentives from the State of Nebraska, as well as a Community Development Block Grant and a TIF district established by the Village of Jackson, to finance the plant.

Designed to produce 50 million gallons of ethanol each year, Siouxland Ethanol became operational in May 2007. The plant consumes 30 million bushels of corn each year to produce a clean-burning, high-octane gasoline additive. This corn is purchased from local farmers and elevators and the resources are returned to local communities.

Speakers:

- **Pat Baker,** Plant Manager, Siouxland Ethanol
- **Tim Stoppel,** Production Manager, Siouxland Ethanol

- **Pat McElory,** GM/CEO, Northeast Nebraska Telephone Co.

Noon – 12:05 p.m. **Travel to The Lunch Box**
262 E Elk
Jackson, Nebraska 68743

12:05 – 1:00 p.m. Eat lunch

1:00 – 1:45 p.m. **Travel to Cedar County Veterinary Services**
S Robinson Ave
Hartington, NE 68739

1:45 – 2:45 p.m. **Tour Cedar County Veterinary Services**, home to Veterinarians Ben and Erin Schroeder, stars of the NatGeoWild television show Heartland Docs, DVM. Rural healthcare services – including veterinary services – rely on broadband service for office operations, telehealth capability, and 24/7 communications.

Hartelco, established in 1905 as Cedar County Farmer's Telephone Company, now provides a 100% fiber optic cable community with a total service area of 298 fiber route miles and approximately 1,000 broadband households.

Speakers:
- **Dr. Ben or Dr. Erin Schroeder,** veterinarians
- **Tom Noecker,** CEO, Hartelco
- **Lois Lammers,** General Manager, Hartelco

2:45 – 3:00 p.m. **Travel to Avera Medical Clinic**
W Darlene Street
Hartington, NE 68739

3:00 – 4:00 p.m. **Visit Avera Medical Clinic**, a department of Avera Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton, South Dakota, the clinic provides a range of health care services, including a telehealth program that enables patients in rural areas to receive health care. Robust broadband service is essential for providing reliable rural healthcare.

Speakers:
- **Amanda Mueller,** Clinic Manager, Avera Medical Clinic
- **Tom Noecker,** CEO, Hartelco
- **Lois Lammers,** General Manager, Hartelco

4:00 – 4:15 p.m. **Travel to Diane's Green House**
88781 557th Ave
Fordyce, NE 68736

4:15 - 5:15 p.m. **Tour Diane's Green House** -- Started in 2000 as a small, home-based idea, the facility has grown into multiple greenhouses on more than two acres. This business draws customers from across the region and relies on broadband service from Hartelco for POS and business operations.

Speakers:

- **Diane Dickes,** Owner, Diane's Greenhouse
- **Tom Noecker,** CEO, Hartelco
- **Lois Lammers,** General Manager, Hartelco

5:15 – 6:30 p.m. **Travel to The Good Earth Farm**
28318 466th Ave
Lennox, SD 57039

6:30 – 8:30 p.m. **Dinner and discussion about the broadband industry at a national level**. Based in Mitchell, South Dakota and serving clients across the country, Vantage Point Solutions provides comprehensive engineering and consulting services to the broadband, energy, financial, agriculture, and business sectors.
Speakers:

- **Larry Thompson,** Founder and Executive Director, Vantage Point Solutions
- **Jacki Miskimins,** Member, FRS Board of Directors and Director of Communication and Engagement, Vantage Point Solutions

8:30 – 9:00 p.m. **Travel to Holiday Inn**
2040 W Russell Street
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

Overnight in Sioux Falls, SD.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14, 2026

7:30 a.m. **Depart Sioux Falls** (FSD) to DFW on AA1012

3:59 p.m. **Arrive Washington, DC** (DCA) on AA1414