

SITES FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS CENTERS SELECTED

From Okla. Commerce Dept.

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Dr. Leo Presley, executive-director of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, announced today the names of 33 rural communities chosen as sites for new telecommunications centers across the state.

All of the community centers will be interconnected through the statewide, fiberoptic network called OneNet which will allow them access to the Internet, the Library of Congress, public libraries, universities, medical centers, and other resources.

"Developing a state-wide capability in telecommunications is absolutely essential to the future of economic development and education in Oklahoma, particularly in rural areas of the state," commented Presley. "Such a networking system will make an entire world of information, data and communications accessible to all Oklahomans."

According to Beth Rodriguez, director of programs for the Commerce Department's research and planning group, no other state has this system on such a large scale. "Most centers will have equipment in several locations — for example, a public library, cooperative extension office, and a school — creating a 'virtual,' rather than physical, community center," commented Rodriguez. The concept for the telecommunications centers originated from Oklahoma's 1993-98 Strategic Economic Development Plan.

A \$1.5 million grant to construct and operate a portion of the centers is funded through the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program, U.S. Department of Commerce. Partners in the project include the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, State Regents for Higher Education, OSU Institute for Telecommunications and the State Data Processing and Telecommunications Advisory Committee. Southwestern Bell-Oklahoma recently gave \$1.4 million to the Commerce Department to help construct and maintain the remainder of the telecommunications centers across the state.

The Advisory Committee provided \$6.5 million in matching funds to construct OneNet. "The impact of OneNet is that it will launch Oklahoma into the 21st century and allow us to compete on a more global basis," said committee chairman Senator Ben Robinson, D-Muskogee. "Information will

be shared in a cost efficient manner and the benefits of these centers are enormous," added Representative Calvin Anthony, D-Stillwater, vice-chair of the Advisory Committee.

The 33 sites for the new centers were selected from a total of 63 communities' proposals submitted from throughout the state. A panel of judges composed of independent public and private sector leaders in community development and telecommunications rated the community center proposals on criteria such as community impact and design quality.

The cities selected are: Ada, Altus, Alva, Ardmore, Bartlesville (also serving Dewey), Chickasha, (also serving Ninnekah, Amber, Alex, Tuttle, Verden, Rush Springs), Clinton (also serving Weatherford, Concho and Arapaho), Coweta, Durant, El Reno, Enid, Fairview, Frederick, Hugo, Jay (also serving Grove), Lawton, Lindsay, Mangum, McAlester, Miami (also serving Afton), Muskogee, Okmulgee (also serving Henryetta), Perry, Ponca City (also serving Newkirk), Poteau, Pryor, Seminole (also serving Wewoka), Stigler (also serving Keota, McCurtain and Quinton), Stroud, Vinita (also serving Welch), Wilburton and Woodward. For more information, please contact Beth Rodriguez at (405) 841-5148.

FROM THE SENATE FLOOR, MAY 2, 1996

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) In an abbreviated session on Thursday, the Senate considered the follow resolutions:

SCR60, by Sen. Frank Shurden, D-Henryetta, asking that the federal government undertake an investigation of the cattle market in the United States, was adopted by unanimous consent.

SCR61, by Sen. Trish Weedn, D-Purcell, praising the late Matthew Hatcher, a 31-year-old volunteer firefighter who lost his life while fighting a fire, was adopted by unanimous consent.

SR56, by Sen. Jack Bell, D-Idabel, recognizing the Idabel High School band for its recent success in a national competition, was adopted by unanimous consent.

*"A nation without the means of reform
is without the means of survival."
Edmund Burke*

MORE FROM THE HOUSE FLOOR, MAY 2, 1996

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The House gallery was filled during much of Thursday's session with those who had come to the capitol to take part in a "funeral" for **HB1896**. The measure would provide a \$5,500 tax exemption for private sector retirees.

Those in attendance saw:

House members adopt the conference committee report for **HB2170**. The measure, by Rep. Joe Hutchinson, D-Jay, which allows the Wildlife Commission to set the dates for quail season, received a passing vote of 57-21.

House members voted 85-8 to pass **HB2553**, by Rep. Mark Seikel, D-Harrah, deleting surplus line insurance brokers from licensing requirements, adding fraternal agents to licensing requirements, modifying language and fees and education requirements, after accepting its conference committee report.

Seikel said the conference committee substitute had the endorsement of various insurance associations, largely because it clarified language in existing law.

The House also gave a 93-1 passing vote to **HB3037**, by Rep. Fred Perry, R-Tulsa, requiring environmental agencies to promulgate rules to establish penalties to be imposed against any person who knowingly makes a false compliant or who knowingly misrepresents or omits material information relating to the complaint. Perry said the conference committee report, which was adopted, "calms the bill," giving jurisdiction over the matter to district court.

Rep. Laura Boyd, D-Norman, cast the only vote against the measure.

HR1058, by Rep. Forrest Claunch, R-Midwest City, declaring Thursday National Day of Prayer in Oklahoma, was adopted by unanimous consent and all representatives were made co-authors of the bill by unanimous consent.

SB786, by Rep. Gary Bastin, D-Del City, received a passing vote of 94-1, after accepting its conference committee report. Rep. Wanda Jo Peltier, D-Oklahoma City, cast the only vote against the bill, which authorizes the Oklahoma Real Estate Commission to prescribe fees by rules, removes power of the commission to have jurisdiction over persons who are not longer licensed and requires persons who have active management

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