



The Patrons Chain

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL GRANGE

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August 13, 2021

Infrastructure Package Finally Passed

By Betsy Huber, National Grange President

This week the Senate passed the long debated Infrastructure package with some bipartisan support, 69-30. Now the legislation heads to the House, where it faces opposition from Republicans as well as progressive Democrats who have expressed frustration with the limited scope of the bill. Included in the package is \$65 billion for broadband which would give a big boost to our efforts to connect all Americans.

As we expressed before, the National Grange has a concern about the definition of broadband included in the bill. To reach the last mile and last acre of rural America with high speed broadband, the highest priority for these funds should be to connect the truly unserved areas first, such as farms, ranches, their households and their neighbors who have historically been unconnected.

The current FCC broadband definition states the minimum speed must be at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds. Of course higher speeds are preferred where available, but setting the minimum speed at 100/20 as in the Infrastructure bill would allow providers to upgrade current service rather than supplying service to new areas which would be more expensive to do. Again the last mile and last acre would be left out.

A mix of technologies and broadband providers must be considered eligible for these funds if we are to reach those still unserved while funding is available. Fiber is the “gold standard” but may not be practical or feasible for more remote areas.

In the past, roadblocks to deployment have been access to rights-of-way and pole attachments for broadband providers. Some kind of mediation process may need to be established to achieve this crucial access. This will involve negotiations with federal, state and local agencies as well as private entities such as rural electric cooperatives.

With the money that has been allocated for expansion of broadband in the last year or two, we are very hopeful that our rural residents will soon be able to connect as well as those in urban areas now can.

How Often Your Grange Should Post on Facebook

By Kennedy Gwin, National Grange Communications Manager

While at Western Regionals last weekend with the National Grange team I gave a presentation on social media and online record keeping. One very important question I received while in this workshop was “How often should my Grange post on our Facebook?”

There is no written rule for this type of information which often leaves people feeling lost and unsure. Well, fear not because I’m about to lay them out for you!

First thing to keep in mind is how often you post. On average your local Grange should be posting something engaging 3-4 times a week. When I say engaging, I mean something your community members can like, comment on, or reshare.

Second thing to keep in mind is the types of posts you are posting. Make sure they are all different and not just the same few things over and over.

Finally, when posting make sure to post on days like Wednesday and Friday, as those days of the week have the highest log on rate with the most people engaged. Avoid the weekends as those are the lowest days of viewer rates as most people are busy on the weekends.

Keeping your Facebook up to date with the most recent information your Grange has to offer is a great way to engage the community.

Whether it is a legislative update, community service project, or event, advertising them on social media is a great way to get the word out!

Consumers Complain, KMP Responds: Four Ways to Reclaim Your Right to Paper Communications

Courtesy of Keep Me Posted

Consumer complaints to Keep Me Posted (KMP) increased throughout the pandemic as service providers altered or removed paper communication preferences at an alarming rate. For years, banks, utilities, telecoms and other companies have encouraged and even incentivized their customers to voluntarily opt in to digital correspondence on their accounts. Over time however, many service providers have replaced carrots with sticks and charge punishing fees for paper bills and statements.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, a laundry list of major corporations have taken advantage of widespread disruptions to proactively assault longstanding communications preferences. Far too many stopped asking consumers to opt in to electronic bills, statements and other important notices, and instead just switched their account holders from paper to digital communication without prior consent.

These anti-consumer practices show no sign of fixing themselves, but there is a silver lining. In many instances, consumers can reclaim their preferences for paper communications, free of charge, by taking a few proven steps.

Option One: Use KMP’s sample letter to request that a company revert back to paper communications, and ask that they waive all paper fees. Consumers who have used this template have reported back that their banks, utilities and other service providers were often very accommodating, with paper correspondence restored quickly or fees for such removed, even refunded.

Option Two: Engage with companies on social media, sharing your frustration with paper fees or your concern over having your communications preferences switched without asking. Depending on the circumstance, it might be best to share with the corporate Facebook or Twitter

account after direct communications with customer service fails to get results. This elevates the seriousness and adds to the unwelcome scrutiny most companies seek to avoid.

Option Three: If you have already used the KMP sample letter in direct correspondence and have made your concerns known publicly to the official social media accounts of the company abusing your paper preferences, it might be time to reach out to the Better Business Bureau (BBB). This influential organization has been dedicated to fostering marketplace trust for over a century, and provides no cost options to file formal complaints as well as write business reviews.

Option Four: If you have gotten nowhere restoring free paper communications by reaching out to a company directly, on social media and even after notifying the BBB, it may be worthwhile to contact your state's office of attorney general. As the chief legal officers of their jurisdictions, AGs serve as the ultimate public interest watchdogs. Furthermore, their offices counsel state government agencies and legislatures, and thus have a role in elevating the issue of our collective rights to paper communications.

Grange Benefit

Are you ready for back-to-school shopping?

Whether you're shopping for yourself or a student in grade school or college, a great set of school supplies can help them feel prepared and eager to learn. Buying school supplies can prove costly, and savvy students and parents are often on the hunt for good deals. Here are a few tips to help you prepare for the upcoming school year:

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Thanks to the following for their recent Custom Orders -

Henrietta Keller - IL, What she ordered is a "secret"! Clark County Pomona Grange, WA for a Desk Embosser.

La Plata Pomona Grange, CO for Drink Cups. Springwater Grange #263, OR for Sail Flags in promoting their

Breakfast Fund Raisers! Carol Carpenter, Bethlehem Grange, NY - for Business Cards & Rubber Stamps.

NYS Grange Museum, NY for their limited edition Holiday Ornaments. Karina Pearson, CA for Name Badges.

And to many others that placed order(s) - we say "Thank You!"

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ADVOCACY PLAYBOOK

WHATS THE ISSUE?

In 2015 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Army Corps of Engineers implemented the Clean Water rule, commonly referred to as the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule. The rule is a regulation under the Clean Water Act of 1972 which significantly expanded the scope of bodies of water deemed to fall under federal regulations due to their hydrological or ecological to larger navigable waters, interstate waters, and territorial seas. This expansion of waters which fall under federal regulation led to a significant increase in the number of bodies of water on agricultural operations subject to strict EPA supervision. In 2017, the Trump administration began a process to review and rescind or revise the 2015 WOTUS rule and following federal litigation the rule was formally suspended in early 2020. Since being elected, the Biden administration has indicated its intent to reimplement a more expansive WOTUS rule, however not exactly the same as the rule was in 2015.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

One of the industries most impacted by the expanded scope of federally regulated waters was agriculture. Due to the vast land holdings required for agriculture, many farmers found parts of their operations now fell under onerous federal regulations which limited their ability to properly manage their crops. Yet more, due to the expansive nature of the regulation it was often unclear if certain irrigation ditches, retention ponds, or even just low areas of land which could fill with water could be subject to federal water regulations. Altogether, the 2015 WOTUS rule significantly impacted farms due to burdensome regulation of almost all water that crossed their lands and confusion about what areas could be subject to these regulations.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you want to get involved in crafting the new WOTUS rule, the EPA is currently soliciting public input prior to crafting a new rule. Information on how to submit comments can be found here:

<https://www.epa.gov/wotus> When submitting comments, it is useful to include a story about how the WOTUS rule will affect you, your family, and your community. Each call, email, and letter the EPA receives will help ensure that the new WOTUS rule respects private property rights and allows the agriculture economy to flourish. By lending the voice of Grangers across the country in support of a fair WOTUS rule, together we can push the administration to create a system which benefits both the environment and farmers.

