



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
NEWS RELEASE

Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elin Swanson Katz

Elin.Katz@ct.gov (preferred)

860-827- 2901(office) *or*

William Vallee

William.Vallee@ct.gov (preferred)

860-827-2905(office)

860-716-7177 (cell)

**Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz Announces Formation of
Connecticut State Broadband Office and Promotes Internet
Survey as First Official Action**

New Britain, Conn. (July 21, 2015) – Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz announced the formation of the Connecticut State Broadband Office within the Office of Consumer Counsel, pursuant to legislation passed in the last legislative session. Connecticut joins every other New England state as well as New York and other states in the region in creating agencies or offices dedicated to promoting broadband access.

Created by Public Act 15-5, the Broadband Office is charged with facilitating “the availability of broadband access to every state citizen and increas[ing] access to and the adoption of ultra-high-speed gigabit capable broadband networks.” The statute directs the Consumer Counsel to work with public and nonprofit entities, state agencies, municipalities, local officials and private corporations to maximize “opportunities for the expansion of broadband access in the state and fostering innovative approaches to broadband in the state.” Leading the State Broadband Office along with Consumer Counsel Katz is State Broadband Policy Coordinator William Vallee, a long-time attorney with the Office of Consumer Counsel.

As the first official act of the State Broadband Office, Katz announced that the Office has partnered with the UConn School of Business to create two internet surveys – one for businesses, one for residents – which ask respondents about their internet speed, cost, usage, and satisfaction level with their options. The surveys are available through the following internet links:

Household: https://uconn.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eyq5dTMcQ8dOYh7

Business: https://uconn.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0x0G79ktmfyQ7n7

Consumer Counsel Katz urges every business and resident to consider responding, as the results will help direct the activities of the State Broadband Office. The survey was created under the direction of UConn Professor Sudip Bhattacharjee, and the results will be used in ongoing studies at the UConn School of Business on the economic impact of improved broadband speeds. Results from the study will be available later this year on the OCC's website at ct.gov/occ.

“With input from our businesses and residents, under the scholarly guidance of the UConn School of Business and Professor Bhattacharjee, we will develop a clearer picture of our citizens’ wants and needs with respect to Broadband access,” Katz said.

Katz says the State Broadband Office will also assume leadership of recent efforts to bring ultra-high-speed internet (up to 1 gigabit per second) to Connecticut’s citizens, known as the CTgig Project, in order to achieve profound benefits for Connecticut, including for the economy, educational achievement and access, and quality of life.

The State Broadband Office will work with interested municipalities through the CTgig Project to identify options for creating internet fiber networks through public-private partnerships. Cities and towns that invest in such networks should see many potential benefits, including the following:

- Faster internet speeds at lower prices, as well as increased reliability and better customer service, for every home and business;
- 200-300 skilled jobs per municipality, supported by 30-day worker training programs at local community colleges;
- Opportunities to reduce the “digital divide” that challenges every school district, by ensuring every student and every family has access to the internet for schoolwork and teacher communication;
- Access to on-line jobs, as an increasing numbers of companies and businesses now require people to apply for jobs through the internet;
- Additional jobs and opportunities as more citizens can telecommute, operate home-based businesses, or create virtual offices; and
- Increased economic development, as more and more businesses, including high-value, modern, data-driven companies, are demanding ultra-high-speed internet that would be available through the municipal network.

Consumer Counsel Katz said that many municipalities are interested in internet fiber networks to meet growing demands for gigabit-speed broadband.

###

The State Broadband Office is part of the Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC). The OCC is the State of Connecticut's advocate for consumers on issues relating to electricity, natural gas, water, and telecommunications. For more information, visit www.ct.gov/occ.