

## Zack Space Holds First Broadband Task Force Meeting

Monday, July 23, 2007

Left of Ohio

I know I'm starting to sound like the president of the Zack Space fan club but Space is truly an embodiment of why I'm fascinated with politics. That said, when Space takes on an issue that really effects me like the lack of rural broadband internet he has my full attention.

This morning Zack Space held the first meeting of his newly formed "Connecting Appalachia Broadband Task Force" in Coshocton to plan out their goals and draft a mission statement.

Once Again the members of the task force are:

- Stan Ahalt, Executive Director of the Ohio Supercomputer Center (OSC)
- Fred Deel, Director of the Governor's Office of Appalachia
- Randy Hunt, State Director for Ohio, Rural Development, United States Department of Agriculture
- Chris Chapman, Ohio Office of Information Technology
- Ed Armstrong, Jackson County Commissioner
- Tom Wheaton, Carroll County Commissioner
- Rick Schriver, Morgan County Commissioner
- Harry Eadon, Tuscarawas County Port Authority
- Ken Peters, resident of Carroll County
- Gary Little, President of Information Technology Alliance of Appalachian Ohio (ITAAO)
- Cheryl Burchard, Ohio Telecommunication Association
- (OTA)
- Jon McGee, Ohio Cable Telecommunications Association (OCTA)

It isn't completely sunshine and roses for this post though. I was *tremendously* disappointed that the meeting wasn't open to the public. Of course it's still way too early to pass any judgment on the program but transparency is rarely a bad thing. Internet access, like water and telephone service, is a utility and should be discussed openly. I know I would have tried to make the two hour trip.

It's also disappointing that I've yet to see any of the other Appalachian Reps. do anything about this issue on this scale. The problem doesn't just stop at the borders of the 18<sup>th</sup> district and if we truly want to connect Appalachia than we're we'll need to do more than just ride Space's coattails.