

For Immediate Release

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**NEXT CENTURY CITIES KICKS OFF RETURN OF
BIPARTISAN TECH CONFERENCE WITH RELEASE OF STUDY
“Cut Off From the Courthouse: How the Digital Divide Impacts
Access to Justice and Civic Engagement.”**

Washington, D.C. (March 28, 2022) – Today, Next Century Cities released [*Cut off From the Courthouse: How the Digital Divide Impacts Access to Justice and Civic Engagement*](#), a report authored in collaboration with the Samuelson Law, Technology, and Public Policy Clinic at the University of California, Berkeley’s School of Law, ahead of the return of the organization’s hallmark event, [Bipartisan Tech](#), on Tuesday, March 29, 2022.

[*Cut Off From the Courthouse*](#) documents the impact that digital inequities have on remote court proceedings, civic engagement, and participation in government programs. Interviews with 27 public defenders, family attorneys, public servants, community organizers, and others working to ensure fair outcomes in remote proceedings provide sobering accounts of the challenges associated with being disconnected when trying to gain access to public forums that have transitioned online.

Corian Zacher, Senior Policy Counsel at Next Century Cities, offered the following remarks on the significance of the report:

The increase in exclusively online services accelerated by the pandemic has left a lasting mark on the way that residents across the US participate in democracy, access public services, and exercise their rights in court. Without equitable connectivity to accompany the transition, barriers to legal and civic participation will continue to pose insurmountable obstacles for already disadvantaged residents.

Connectivity can help to address long-standing inequities while shepherding in new opportunities for engagement. As the report illustrates, everyone has a role to play in bringing affordable, reliable broadband within reach nationwide.

The full report is available [here](#). A blogpost summarizing the highlights of the study can be accessed [here](#).

Cut Off From the Courthouse sets the tone for [Bipartisan Tech](#), a virtual conference dedicated to advancing forward-thinking ideas by local leaders who are coming up with effective ways to remedy digital divides. Register for the event [here](#). The conference agenda can be found [here](#). The conference will be livestreamed on **March 29, 2022, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m ET** to the Next Century Cities [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.

Commissioner Teri Freehling of Berrien County, Michigan, and Grace Simrall, Chief of Civic Innovation and Technology for the City of Louisville, Kentucky, will provide the opening and closing keynote remarks. Participants will also hear from Mayor Brandon Scott, City of Baltimore, Maryland; Deputy Director, Digital Inclusion & Equity Autumn Evans, City of Detroit, Michigan; and Innovation Fellow Joshua Williams, Office of Mayor Sylvester Turner in Houston, Texas, in short video clips.

The first panel, *What Broadband Equity Means for Judicial and Civic Participation*, features Ross Ufberg and Shalev Netanel, Researchers from The Samuelson Law, Technology and Public Policy Clinic at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law; Javier Trujillo, Chief Assistant Director, County of Marin, California; Peter Estes, Consumer Rights Organizer, Senior Disability Action Network; and Olivia Sideman, Associate Deputy Public Defender, Alameda County, California.

In the second panel, *Reaching the People We Serve*, Paolo Balboa, Senior Programs and Data Manager, National Digital Inclusion Alliance, will moderate a discussion with Peggy Schaffer, Executive Director, Connect Maine; Kathryn Greiner, Administrator, City of Condon, Oregon; and Ryan Collins, Broadband Coordinator, Buckeye Hills Regional Council.

The last panel, *Democracy and Civic Participation* will showcase Kat Trujillo, Deputy Director, Libraries Without Borders; Brittany Woods-Orrison, Broadband Specialist, Alaska Public Interest Research Group and Native Movement; Commissioner Greg Puckett, Mercer County, West Virginia; and Samuel Blackwood, Director of Public Policy, Project READY.

The conference also incorporates several breakout sessions for conversation and networking, including those led by the Marconi Society's Samantha Schartman and Open Technology Institute's Claire Park. Participants are encouraged to join a pre-conference networking session with the Next Century Cities team at 12:30 pm and a lively speed networking event at 4:00 pm.

Special thanks to our conference sponsors Google, Google Fiber, and the Internet Society - DC Chapter for supporting this program.

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