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Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, Coachella Valley Housing Coalition, and Frontier Communications Unite to Help Bridge the Digital Divide

Frontier public Wi-Fi hot spots unlock opportunities in underserved communities throughout the Coachella Valley and beyond

INDIO, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, the Coachella Valley Housing Coalition (CVHC), and Frontier Communications celebrated the deployment of free public Wi-Fi and computer lab renovations at the Villa Hermosa Apartments, Eastern Coachella Valley farmworker family housing complex. A ribbon-cutting ceremony highlighted local and statewide efforts to bridge the digital divide and announced the winners of a summer art contest for students of farmworker families. CVHC resident students created artwork depicting the benefits of increased internet access, with winning entries to be published on Assemblymember Garcia's website and displayed in his Coachella District Office.

"Internet access has become a modern day necessity and should not be treated as simply a luxury. Unfortunately, more than five million Californians are caught on the wrong side of the digital divide and low-income, rural communities like those in my district are especially affected by this deficit," said Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, author of AB 1665, *the Internet for All Now Act of 2017*. "I highly commend the partnerships Frontier Communications has forged with CVHC and other regional entities to provide free public Wi-Fi and other programs for underserved locations in my district and beyond."

Coachella Valley Housing Coalition Executive Director Julie Bornstein stated, "For Coachella Valley Housing Coalition, 'bridging the digital divide' means providing residents living in our affordable housing properties all the necessary tools to succeed in school, work and in life. Coachella Valley School Districts use the internet for homework, writing assignments and parental communication. We know that more than 75 percent of colleges take their applications online, and nearly all Fortune 500 companies post new jobs through their websites: all require computers with Internet access. No one should have to apply for a job or do their homework on a smartphone. Frontier Communications and Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia are making great progress in ending the barriers to connectivity for low-income households."

Villa Hermosa is one of six sites where Frontier has deployed free public Wi-Fi in the Coachella Valley. Other locations include Casitas Del Valle Apartments, Rosa Gardens Apartments, Coyote Run Apartments, Fuente de Paz Apartments, and TODEC Legal Center.

"Frontier Communications is proud to join as a community partner in the Coachella Valley and across the State to increase Internet access through programs that help all Californians narrow the digital divide," said Joe Gamble, senior vice president for Frontier Communications. "Frontier takes pride in our many years of bringing broadband service to unserved and underserved communities. Our Wi-Fi hot spots and Affordable Broadband programs align with Frontier's commitment to serve as many California communities as possible and affirm our deep focus to expand high-speed connectivity."

In addition to establishing free Wi-Fi in strategic areas throughout the State, Frontier Communications also provides an Affordable Broadband program that offers low-cost access to high-speed internet and a free Chromebook laptop to qualifying individuals. A display table and program information was available to residents at event.

This year, Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia is leading a bipartisan legislative initiative to increase broadband infrastructure in disadvantaged communities.

"Thirty percent of California households do not have access to high-speed Internet or a computer. In this day and age, that is unacceptable. AB 1665, *the Internet for All Now Act of 2017* seeks to bring about internet equity for Californian communities by unlocking infinite educational, health and economic opportunities," shared Assemblymember Garcia. "If successful, many more communities, similar to Villa Hermosa Apartments, will be able to become empowered through internet access."

About Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia: Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia (D-Coachella) serves as the chairperson of the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks and Wildlife. He represents the 56th district, which comprises the cities and communities of Blythe, Brawley, Bermuda Dunes, Calexico, Calipatria, Cathedral City, Coachella, Desert Hot Springs, El Centro, Holtville, Imperial, Indio, Mecca, Oasis, North Shore, Salton Sea, Thermal, Thousand Palms, and Westmorland.

About AB 1665, the Internet for All Now Act of 2017: AB 1665 (E. Garcia, 2017), will allocate more than \$300 million and extend the soon-to-expire California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) for broadband deployment and adoption in rural and low income urban areas lacking sufficient internet infrastructure. The CASF was established by the Legislature in 2008 and is administered by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). This year's measure will call upon the CPUC to reach a goal of 98 percent household connectivity per region. AB 1665 also stipulates greater legislative oversight and accountability over the CPUC's administration of funds to improve the program.

About Coachella Valley Housing Coalition: The Coachella Valley Housing Coalition is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3), nonprofit affordable housing development organization founded in 1982 with the purpose of improving the living conditions of low-income individuals and families by constructing and operating affordable housing infused with resident services programs and other opportunities that enrich, build, and grow their lives.

About Frontier Communications: Frontier Communications Corporation (NASDAQ:FTR) is a leader in providing communications services to urban, suburban, and rural communities in 29 states. Frontier offers a variety of services to residential customers over its fiber-optic and copper networks, including video, high-speed internet, advanced voice, and Frontier Secure[®] digital protection solutions. Frontier Business Edge[™] offers communications solutions to small, medium, and enterprise businesses. More information about Frontier is available at www.frontier.com.

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