Thank you for coming on this final day of the Summit to discuss Rural America. This Deep Dive session is designed to share stories on rural America, what has worked, what needs to improve, and how we as state legislators can make rural America better.

Rural America is facing more challenges than ever. From a declining population, to a lack of economic growth, to struggles in providing adequate health care and educational opportunities, to an inability to access the global economy, rural America struggles.

Today we are going hear about the potential of broadband and the economic drivers of rural America. We’ll also get to hear from Anne Hazlett who advises the USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue on rural affairs. We have members of the legislature to discuss how their state has addressed rural concerns.

Most importantly, we’ll get to hear from you, the members of the legislature, on your efforts to respond to your rural constituents, to improve the rural economy, and to share your stories from rural America.

Rather than being formal I’d like to provide brief introductions to our speakers and panelist today.

>>Our first speaker will be:

**Charles M. Davidson**  
**New York Law School**  
**New York, NY**

Charles is a Director of the Advanced Communications Law & Policy Institute (ACLP) at New York Law School.
Charles will be followed by a panel of legislators who will respond to questions regarding rural America:

Senator Jerry Sonnenberg represents Colorado Senate District 1 in northeastern Colorado.

Senator Elaine Bowers grew up on a farm on Ottawa County, Kansas. She’s a small business owner in Concordia.

Senator Benny Shendo has represented New Mexico’s 22 District since 2012. Prior to the legislature he served as the 1st Lt. Governor, Pueblo of Jemez.

Martha Wigton, Director of the House Budget and Research Office in Georgia has worked for the General Assembly for more than 25 years.

Next Chris Mehl will speak on current drivers of the rural economy:

Chris Mehl
Policy Director
Headwaters Economics
Bozeman, MT

Chris is the Policy Director at Headwaters Economics and has extensive experience working in communications and on public policy issues across the nation and the West.

Our Deep Dive session will conclude with Anne Hazlett from USDA has agreed to join us this morning:

Anne Hazlett
Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC

Anne Hazlett serves as the Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development at the United States Department of Agriculture. An Indiana native, she has a deep
and lifelong passion for rural America, small towns and the people who call them home.

Our moderator for the USDA Listening Session is Rep. Tyler Vorpagel, who represents a rural area along Lake Michigan in Wisconsin.

At this point I’d like to turn the meeting over to our first presenter Charles.