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IDAHO EDUCATION NETWORK COMMITTED TO PROVIDING EQUAL ACCESS TO SCHOOLS

BOISE- Yesterday the Idaho District Court granted summary judgment to Syringa Networks on the long-standing lawsuit against the Idaho Education Network.

The Idaho Education Network is a statewide area network that provides high-speed bandwidth and videoconferencing capabilities to Idaho's public high schools. Currently, 219 high schools are connected to the network, which serves more than 87,000 students. Live courses delivered from Idaho teachers direct to Idaho high schools provide students with equal access to course options, especially in rural areas. Since the inception of the Idaho Education Network, students have earned more than 18,000 college credits while still in high school.

"There has never been a question about the opportunities the Idaho Education Network (IEN) provides to our students and teachers," Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter said. "Yesterday's legal decision does not detract from the value of the IEN. I support the IEN and recognize the significance of this service for all of Idaho, especially our rural communities. I call upon all of the parties and stakeholders to commit to preserving this valuable service and unprecedented access to technology for Idaho's students, teachers and communities while we work through the process."

Since 2009, the Idaho Education Network has been in litigation with Syringa Networks over the contracts with Education Networks of America and Qwest (formerly known as CenturyLink) establishing the network. Initially, Syringa Networks filed six counts, all of which were dismissed by the District Court. In 2013, the Idaho Supreme Court affirmed the dismissal of five of the counts, but remanded one count dealing with the amendments to the contracts back to the Idaho District Court. Yesterday's District Court ruling reverses its previous ruling on the contracts, declaring them to be void, and denies the state's motion for summary judgment.

The Department of Administration is currently reviewing the District Court's ruling, and a decision about how to proceed will be forthcoming. The state is committed to continuing to provide course access and opportunities to Idaho's students and fulfilling the Idaho Constitution's obligation to provide a "general, uniform and thorough" system of schools.