

From the General Manager - Richard Ruhl



On behalf of the Pioneer

Telephone Board of Trustees, Management and Employees, I would like to extend our best wishes for a joyful, safe, prosperous, and blessed New Year

to all our members and customers.

As we look back at the year 2020, we can all agree it was a very challenging year as we witnessed the world being thrown into a severe crisis created by the COVID-19 outbreak. This pandemic created many new uncertainties that were incomparable to anything we have experienced in modern history. As the United States' business environment and social norms were essentially brought to a standstill in March 2020, the pandemic required all of us to recalibrate our way of life, including interactions with our family members, work associates and close friends. Even simple every day activities were interrupted or halted altogether. The year 2020 has shown us now, more than ever, technology and access to high-speed Broadband is essential to the quality of life for our Cooperative Members. As we look forward, it's important to reflect on the multitude of broadband build-out projects Pioneer has underway to bring connectivity and high-speed Broadband access to our customers and communities. These projects include the Alternative Connect America Cost Model (A-CAM) project, the USDA Re-Connect grant project, the FCC Rural Development Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction, and Pioneer Telephone's "Community Fiber" overbuild projects.

Pioneer Telephone currently has over \$100 million in completed or approved fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) projects as of Feb. 1, 2021, with several additional contracts scheduled for the Board of Trustees approval in early 2021. We recognize the demand and the need for access to robust broadband for our Cooperative members and Pioneer Telephone, along with numerous

fiber construction contractors are building out our fiber-optic network as quickly as we possibly can. So, we ask for your patience as we continue to work through these multi-year projects. For Pioneer Telephone, the A-CAM project is a \$280 million, 10-year government initiative that began in 2017 and provides Pioneer Telephone the necessary funds to build out fiber-optic cable to high-cost, rural areas. The USDA Re-Connect grant project, is a program which will provide Pioneer Telephone \$25 million in a 75 / 25 percent grant initiative, for a total of \$32 million which will allow Pioneer Telephone to build out additional fiber-to-the-home high-cost locations that would potentially go unserved or be underserved with broadband for the foreseeable future.

Pioneer Telephone has recognized the need for high-speed broadband in the communities we serve. Our "Community Overbuild" projects began in 2019. These multi-year projects will also require a significant capital investment, with approximately \$100 million projected, to build out these communities over a 10-year period. Pioneer's commitment is to replace all of our existing copper plant with new fiber-optic plant, in our effort to bring Gigabit broadband capability to our members and customers in the communities we serve throughout Western Oklahoma.

Numerous rural and urban communities throughout the United States are struggling with the lack of affordable broadband access and the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed how dire the situation is. Pioneer is dedicated to ensuring our members, customers and communities are not left behind. We look forward to continued efforts to expand fiber connectivity in our rural communities in 2021. For more information on our future fiber-optic build-out projects, please visit: GoPioneer.com and click on 'Get Fiber'. I encourage all of our members and customers to register your address on the site, which will inform Pioneer Telephone of your interest in obtaining broadband services in your area.

The success of Pioneer would not be possible without the hard work, commitment, and dedication of our outstanding employees to the mission of the Cooperative, our subsidiary companies, and to the members we serve. I want to thank and congratulate our employees for all they do and to recognize them for the accomplishments they helped achieve during the difficult and uncertain year in 2020. The success of your Cooperative is dependent on the talent of our employees who "go the extra mile" in serving our Members and Customers.

A part of Pioneer Telephone's successful and long-standing Mission is to return patronage capital to our members. At their January 2021 Board Meeting, your Board of Trustees approved a general membership patronage capital payment to be made to our members in March of this year. The total cash and credits are estimated to be \$7,391,815. The procedure for distribution of this year's general membership payment will be the same as in the past several years, wherein a credit will be applied to existing customers' bills for any payment less than \$300 in the month of March 2021. Payments of \$300 or more will be paid by check instead of credit and will be mailed around mid-March. Those members whose service was connected after Dec. 31, 2020 will not receive a general membership capital payment this year. In consideration of the reduction of the distribution cost by 50 percent or more, and the cost of processing and mailing 80,000 plus checks, the Board of Trustees and Management believe this distribution process will once again prove to be a very efficient and cost-effective manner for the distribution of this general membership payment.

The patronage capital payments and credits approved for 2020 are based on the Capital Credit Retirement Guidelines per Board Policy adopted by the Board on September 7, 2017, utilizing both member and non-member patronage. The 2020 patronage capital retirement reflects payment of the balance of 100 percent for the year 2002. (Cont. on pg. 2)

(Cont. from pg. 1) In addition, approximately \$739,182 or 10 percent of the total will be paid to all Members in accordance with the Board Policy guidelines.

The Board of Trustees also approved the continued payment of capital credits to the estates of deceased patrons. During the past year, Pioneer paid \$1,886,856 to the estates of deceased members. Since 1984, Pioneer has returned approximately \$37,111,639 in patronage capital on estates to its membership.

Together, these two patronage distributions total an estimated \$9,278,671 in patronage cash and bill credits, which will be returned to the Membership for the year 2020. Inclusive of last year's payments, Pioneer Telephone will have paid an estimated grand total of \$133,061,000 in general membership and estate patronage capital cash payments to the Cooperative membership. The amount of patronage capital returned to the Pioneer Membership is a huge accomplishment for the Cooperative—an accomplishment you, as a Member, can be very proud of.

The Pioneer Telephone Board of Trustees and Management are very pleased the Cooperative will be financially able to make a general membership payment of this magnitude this year, and at the same time continue the payments on the estates of deceased members. Pioneer Telephone is owned by those it serves, and as a Cooperative, is operated for the mutual benefit of its members. Your patronage capital is tangible evidence your Cooperative is working for you. If you have questions about your patronage capital credit account or need to update your address in our records, please call or write to the *Pioneer Telephone Capital Credit Department*, 405. 375.0873 or 1.800.650.6116, P.O. Box 539, Kingfisher, Oklahoma 73750, or you can visit our website at: GoPioneer.com.

As a concern for the health and safety of our members and employees, the Pioneer Board of Trustees has chosen to postpone the Pioneer Telephone 2021 Annual Meeting to a date later in the year. Hopefully, by then, we will have all received the COVID-19 vaccine and be able to enjoy a great Annual Meeting. Currently, we do not have any dates set, but please continue to check the upcoming Tele-Topics for us to make the announcement.

As we enter the year 2021, I know we are losing patience and want the pandemic to end soon so we can return to a resemblance of a normal way of life. However, for the foreseeable future, I must encourage each of you to please remain cautious and exercise the CDC guidelines when in public of wearing a mask, social distancing, and frequent hand washing.

Despite the complex, and at times, devastating challenges we are witnessing, we all have so much to be thankful for. I want to thank all our Members, Customers and Employees of this great Cooperative. We are truly blessed.

Together, Moving Forward.

Richard Ruhl
General Manager

ATTENTION: ALL DISTRICT MEETINGS POSTPONED



The filing for perspective Trustee candidates that is traditionally scheduled for April has been POSTPONED until a later date.

The District 6 Meeting will be POSTPONED. District 6 includes the following exchanges: OKARCHE, COMANCHE, APACHE, TEMPLE, and HASTINGS

The District 8 Meeting will be POSTPONED. District 8 includes the following exchanges: HELENA, CARMEN, HUNTER, LAMONT, DEER CREEK, HOPETON, CLEO SPRINGS, DACOMA, WAKITA, POND CREEK, NASH, ALINE, and WAYNOKA

The District 10 Meeting will be POSTPONED. District 10 includes the following exchanges: KINGFISHER and DOVER

The District 12 Meeting will be POSTPONED. District 12 includes the following exchanges: NEWCASTLE

**2021 PIONEER TELEPHONE
ANNUAL MEETING POSTPONED
UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

2020 Ad Valorem Tax

Pioneer Long Distance, Inc.

Blaine.....	2,817.00
Canadian	5,951.00
Cotton.....	1,876.00
Custer	13,312.00
Dewey.....	38.00
Grant.....	1,243.00
Kingfisher	303,406.00
Major	4,055.00
McClain.....	21,570.00
Oklahoma	6,440.62
Roger Mills	8,456.00
Woods	2,003.00
TOTAL	\$ 371,167.62

O.T.&T. Communications, Inc.

Ellis.....	37.00
McIntosh	870.00
Muskogee.....	445.00
Okfuskee	657.00
Okmulgee.....	1,144.00
Pittsburg.....	3,420.00
Roger Mills	2,692.00
Seminole	3,040.00
Tillman.....	760.00
TOTAL	\$ 13,065.00

Cellular Network Partnership

Alfalfa.....	17,677.00
Atoka.....	11,439.00
Beckham	18,504.00
Blaine.....	24,920.00
Bryan	6,993.00
Caddo	11,845.00
Canadian	6,566.00
Carter.....	7,769.00
Coal.....	7,691.00
Comanche.....	4,906.00

Cellular Network Partnership Cont.

Cotton.....	5,257.00
Custer	45,492.00
Dewey.....	24,394.00
Ellis.....	18,851.00
Garfield.....	48,174.00
Garvin	4,169.00
Grady	4,635.00
Grant.....	10,333.00
Greer.....	7,015.00
Harmon	5,527.00
Harper	11,796.00
Jackson	9,306.00
Jefferson.....	5,564.00
Johnston	7,404.00
Kingfisher	357,729.00
Kiowa	10,166.00
Logan.....	10,479.00
Major	20,098.00
Marshall	9,493.00
McClain.....	7,968.00
Murray.....	3,938.00
Nowata	2,529.00
Okmulgee.....	1,393.00
Pontotoc.....	23,746.00
Roger Mills	15,936.00
Stephens	9,716.00
Tillman.....	19,385.00
Washington.....	1,805.00
Washita.....	13,485.00
Woods	12,107.00
Woodward	45,913.00
Butler, KS.....	283.90
Cowley, KS.....	2,086.98
Montgomery, KS.	101.68
Sumner, KS	61.74
TOTAL	\$894,647.30

Pioneer Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

Alfalfa.....	15,260.00
Beckham	12,940.00
Blaine.....	97,756.00
Caddo	17,805.00
Canadian	34,712.00
Cleveland	195.00
Comanche.....	11,495.00
Cotton.....	10,644.00
Custer	38,664.00
Dewey.....	25,560.00
Ellis.....	34,607.00
Garfield.....	81,418.00
Garvin	724.00
Grady	60,301.58
Grant.....	32,575.00
Harmon	25,416.00
Harper	21,248.00
Jackson	2,767.00
Jefferson.....	4,778.00
Kay	725.00
Kingfisher	343,151.00
Kiowa	94.00
Logan.....	41,282.00
Major	58,979.00
McClain.....	281,680.00
Muskogee.....	8.00
Noble	696.00
Oklahoma	2,045.94
Payne.....	1,307.00
Pontotoc.....	1,070.00
Stephens.....	35,922.00
Tillman	101,193.00
Washita	16,959.00
Woods	31,982.00
Woodward	87,211.00
TOTAL	\$ 1,533,170.52

Do-Not-Call

Registration Information for National and Pioneer Do-Not-Call Lists

Pioneer Do-Not-Call Registry

Pioneer maintains a do-not-call list that you may register with if you do not wish to receive telemarketing calls from us, at a specific telephone number. If you would like to register, please dial 611 from your landline or cellular phone, or call 888.PTC.COOP 888.782.2667), to ask that your number be listed on Pioneer's do-not-call list.

In response to your request, Pioneer will update its list within 30 days of your request. Your number will remain on the list for five years unless you ask us to remove it sooner.

If your number is on Pioneer's do-not-call list, Pioneer and its representatives will not contact the listed number for sales promotions or other marketing campaigns. Pioneer may still contact that number for non-telemarketing purposes such as customer service surveys, public interest notices, or other service-related matters.

National Do-Not-Call Registry

The Federal Trade Commission has established a National Do-Not-Call Registry for residential consumers and cell phone users that do not wish to receive commercial solicitation over their telephone or cellular device. Pioneer honors Do-Not-Call requests on this national list, as well as state lists and Pioneer's internal Do-Not-Call List.

The National Registry is nationwide and will preclude telephone solicitations made for commercial purposes only, but will not prevent all unwanted calls. It does not cover the following:

- calls from organizations with which you have established a business relationship within the last 18 months, or three months after your last inquiry or application;
- calls for which you have given prior written permission;
- calls which are not commercial or do not include unsolicited advertisements;
- calls by or on behalf of tax-exempt non-profit organizations.

Once you register your phone number(s), telemarketers covered by the National Do-Not-Call Registry have up to 31 days from the date you register, to stop calling you.

You may register your residential telephone number(s) and cell phone number(s) by calling the toll free number, 888.382.1222 and for TTY access, 866.290.4236. The Internet web address for registrations is donotcall.gov. Registration is permanent, unless you revoke such objection by calling the toll free number, or by using the Internet access listed above.

Find out if you qualify for discounted telephone, cellular, or Internet services.

EVERYONE CAN AFFORD TO COMMUNICATE.

Everyone should have access to quality, affordable telecommunications or Internet service. With Pioneer Telephone's Lifeline service, discounted telephone service or broadband Internet is available to anyone who participates in certain government assistance programs or has a household income below a certain level.

The following assistance programs are supported in Oklahoma:

- **Lifeline:** a monthly discount off local telephone service or high-speed Internet service.
- **Enhanced Lifeline:** a larger discount off of monthly local telephone service or high-speed Internet service for qualified subscribers living on Tribal lands.
- **Link Up:** a one-time discount that reduces the cost of initiating service for qualified subscribers living on Tribal lands.

Lifeline is a federal government benefit program and only qualified persons may participate. Lifeline service may not be transferred to any other individual. Applicants must present documentation of household income or participation in qualifying programs. Lifeline is only available for one service per household whether landline, wireless, or internet.

Not sure if you qualify?
We're happy to help.

For Cellular Call:
800-641-2732

For Landline or High-Speed Internet
Call:
888-782-2667

GoPioneer.com

ENTER 2021

It's everyone's hope that 2021 is the year we thought 2020 would be. However, with COVID-19 cases still high, Pioneer is being proactive and **postponing both the Annual Meeting AND District voting until later this year.**

With the release of the COVID vaccine, it is the expectation to have more information in the upcoming weeks to make educated decisions on dates for these (traditionally) in-person Pioneer events. Though we would like to be able to see all of our Members this year, Pioneer's priority is, and always will be, your safety.

Please keep in mind the CDC guidelines and wear a mask while in public, social distance and wash your hands! The last year has been hard, but if we continue to work together and keep others in mind, hopefully we will see this pandemic end and will be able to come together later this year. We will have more information regarding the Annual Meeting and District Voting in upcoming Tele-Topics.

Stay safe.

HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Take 5, Win \$25!

Complete the entry form (all fields must be completed), clip out and mail to: Pioneer Telephone Cooperative, Pioneer Tele-Topics, PO Box 539, Kingfisher, OK 73750

Name: _____

City & Zip: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Pioneer Telephone #: () _____

1. The 2021 Annual Meeting has been postponed.

- True
 False

4. CDC guidelines recommend washing your hands:

- True
 False

2. The District Voting for 2021 has been postponed.

- True
 False

5. The CDC recommends wearing a face mask while in public.

- True
 False

3. I will be able to find out more information about these postponed events in later Volumes of Tele-Topics:

- True
 False



Skip the stamp! Fill this form out online at GoPioneer.com under Tele-Topics Newsletter

IF WE DRAW YOUR ENTRY AND YOUR ANSWERS ARE CORRECT, YOU WIN \$25! ELIGIBILITY: Correctly answer all the questions. You must be a current member/subscriber of Pioneer Telephone Cooperative, Inc., 18 years of age or older. One entry per household. No photocopies. Employees of Pioneer or its subsidiaries, and their immediate household members are not eligible to enter. Winners will be contacted by letter and announced in the next issue of Tele-Topics. Clip out and mail to: Pioneer Telephone Cooperative, Pioneer Tele-Topics, PO Box 539, Kingfisher, OK 73750. **Entries must be received by March 14, 2021.**

IT'S TIME TO DOWNLOAD

SMART

SMART MANAGEMENT



Life is too short to sweat the small stuff and that includes paying your bills. With *GoPioneer SmartHub*, Pioneer hopes to make your life, hectic as it might be, a little simpler.

GoPioneer SmartHub is a web and mobile app that puts the convenience of managing your Pioneer account in the palm of your hand (or in your lap), with several features:

Access to your billing history

View your current bill, along with bills from the previous month if you're wanting to compare costs. We're taking you into a world that's far more organized, than folders filled with paper statements.

Make a payment

It's fast and easy with *GoPioneer SmartHub*. When making your first payment, you'll be able to securely store your payment information for future transactions. This means you can pay your bill with just a few clicks next month.

Set up Automatic payment

Stressing about missing your payment just a week after you paid it? Don't worry, with *GoPioneer SmartHub* you can set up automatic payments so you can cruise through the month on autopilot, no clicking necessary.

View Usage

No more guessing, no more quick texts. Track your data usage with a few quick clicks to avoid fees and observe your consumption history.

Reporting Service issues

While we welcome you into our offices at any time, we know that life can get busy. No need to be put on hold either, send in your service issues with a few quick clicks and we'll put you in the queue and contact you.

There's much more to be explored in the *GoPioneer SmartHub* app. Plenty in life is complicated, so make your life simpler by downloading the app today.



How to
GET THE APP

1. Search GoPioneer in your app store ▶ 2

4. Enter the necessary information

HUB

MENT. **SMART** LIFE. **GOPIONEER** SMARTHUB.



SmartHub is the **BEST** way to get in contact with our techs. Here's some of the perks to using the **APP**.

- 1** Available anywhere, anytime, on any device.
- 2** Important Updates on outages in your area.
- 3** Access Company News/Tele-Topics.
- 4** 24/7 access. Pay your bill or submit a service request at any time. GoPioneer SmartHub is always open.

2. Download the GoPioneer app ▶ 3. Click 'Don't have account - Register'
Note: Make sure you have your Billing Account Number

▶ 5. Explore ▶ 6. Start making life simpler!



Tele-Topics
Volume 1 of 4 2021
P.O. Box 539
Kingfisher, OK 73750
GoPioneer.com



PIONEER TELE-TOPICS (USPS No. 456-200) is owned by and published quarterly for the benefit of the approximately 32,000 member families of Pioneer Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

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CAPITAL CREDIT ESTATE INFORMATION

To obtain your Capital Credit balance, or begin the process to collect for a deceased member, please call toll free at

800-650-6116.

Pioneer Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

Attn: Capital Credit Department

P.O. Box 539 • Kingfisher, OK 73750

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to Pioneer Tele-Topics, P.O. Box 539, Kingfisher, OK 73750.

Periodical Postage paid at Kingfisher, OK 73750 and other additional entry offices.

Member subscription rate: \$2.96/year

Non-Member subscription rate: \$6/year

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Issue 4 Take 5, Win \$25 Winners

\$25 Winners will receive their checks by mail within a few days of this publication.

District #1 winner — *Judy Laubach, Okeene*
District #2 winner — *Leisa Wilson, Arnett*
District #3 winner — *Cassandra Nealey, Davidson*
District #4 winner — *Emily Stinson, Oakwood*
District #5 winner — *Norma McDaniel, Bradley*
District #6 winner — *Mary Frost, Hastings*
District #7 winner — *Sheila Frederick, Drummond*

District #8 winner — *Cecil Hoar, Pond Creek*
District #9 winner — *Richard Terrell, Crescent*
District #10 winner — *Mary Ann Hyatt, Kingfisher*
District #11 winner — *Kathy Allen, Greenfield*
District #12 winner — *Jennifer Howeth, Newcastle*
District At Large winner — *Don Robison, Longdale*