

Curtis Wynn, president and CEO of Roanoke Electric Cooperative, has been selected to receive the 2021 Larry Wooten Rural Leadership Award, awarded by Governor Roy Cooper and Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler.

Wynn has served in leadership roles with Roanoke Electric for 24 years, improving the quality of life in diverse rural communities and becoming an influential leader in rural North Carolina. Wynn's efforts have helped bring high speed internet to rural North Carolina to connect families, farmers, and businesses with the resources they need to thrive in the global economy. Wynn is also a long-time advocate of sustainable land management, including a sustainable forestry program that works specifically with Black landowners, and developing North Carolina's clean energy workforce.

"Curtis Wynn has brought opportunity and innovation to rural North Carolina, making rural communities an even better place to live and work," Governor Cooper said. "Thanks to his work, more families, schools and businesses have access to high-speed internet, a critical tool to help rural communities thrive. We are working hard to build on the great work of our rural co-ops and other partners to get even more North Carolinians connected to broadband."

"We know that if our state is to grow and prosper, it must be a place for everyone to have opportunity. We can't leave rural North Carolina behind as our cities thrive," said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. "Curtis Wynn has built a transformative legacy of leadership, from efforts to bring broadband connectivity to rural communities and raising more than \$10 million to support economic development projects, to encouraging wealth creation through land ownership and sustainable land management. He is an important leader and ally for rural North Carolina."

Wynn is the immediate past president of the Board of Directors of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and currently serves on the boards of North Carolina Electric Cooperative, MCNC, U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, and MyFutureNC.

The Rural Leadership Award is presented each year to an outstanding leader who has worked to advance North Carolina's rural communities. The first ever Rural Leadership Award was presented in 2019 to Larry Wooten, for whom the award is now named. The selection committee includes representatives from Hometown Strong (Governor Cooper's initiative for Rural North Carolina), the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, and the N.C. Department of Agriculture. Award recipients must exemplify rural leadership in three areas: long-standing commitment to rural endeavors, a positive impact on rural life through significant and sustaining improvements for people living in rural communities, and an exemplary character that inspires North Carolinians.