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North Carolina Blockchain Initiative Announces New Appointments and Strategy for 2023-24

Raleigh, North Carolina

The North Carolina Blockchain Initiative (NCBI) was launched in 2019 as a nonpartisan, all-volunteer task force under the supervision of the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina to serve as a primary resource on the emerging digital asset and blockchain ecosystem.

Recognizing the increasing importance of financial technology and blockchain-based technologies, bitcoin, virtual assets, smart contracts, and stablecoins, the NCBI is announcing an expansion plan and new appointments for 2023-24. The ongoing initiative will explore the broader implications for this evolving technology, gather information from private and public sources, pursue policy recommendations, and strengthen our state's position as a leader in technological innovation and consumer protection.

"North Carolina is already home to many notable blockchain and FinTech startups, and we need to do all we can to keep our state competitive," said Lieutenant Governor Robinson. "We appreciate the incredible work this task force has done in researching this transformational technology, and we thank them for their continued service."

"North Carolina is fortunate to have several national leaders on Capitol Hill focused on the crypto ecosystem, including Representative Patrick McHenry, Chairman of the U.S. House Financial Services Committee, and U.S. Senator Ted Budd, a leading voice on decentralized finance," said Dan Spuller, who serves as a Co-Chair to NCBI, and Senior Director of Industry Affairs for the Washington-based Blockchain Association. "We are a state where hard work, innovation, and our ability to adapt has enabled North Carolina to compete globally on many levels."

North Carolina state policymakers have historically been favorable to blockchain technology, and were among the earliest pioneers of regulatory innovation for the blockchain industry with the passage of the [North Carolina Money Transmitters Act of 2016](#), and bipartisan [North Carolina Regulatory Sandbox Act of 2021](#), the latter of which passed both chambers unanimously and created a multi-agency innovation council.

The passage of the bi-partisan Sandbox Act of 2021 was a clear indicator North Carolina is working to be a leader in the ecosystem," said Agnes Gambill West.

The North Carolina Blockchain Initiative and Office of the Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina announced the following nine appointments to the task force:

Task Force Co-Chairs

- ***Daniel Spuller*** - Spuller is Head of Industry Affairs for the Blockchain Association, an appointee to the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond's business and payments advisory council, and previously served in the North Carolina Department of Commerce. He is a reappointment to the task force.
- ***Eric Porper*** - Porper is the co-founder of Emblem Vault and Unboxed Venture Studio based out of Durham. He is a reappointment to the task force.
- ***Stuart Russell*** - Russell is an attorney for a financial institution and investor in cryptocurrencies. He has previously served as Chair of the Forsyth County Board of Elections, Chair of the Forsyth County Bar Association, and as a member of the Board of Governors for the North Carolina Bar Association. He is a new appointment to the task force.

Industry Sector Advisors

- ***Agnes Gambill West (Legal Innovation & Technology)*** - Gambill West is a professor at Appalachian State University, a visiting senior research fellow at the Mercatus Center, an appointee to the North Carolina Innovation Council, a member of the Business and Consumer Payments Advisory Council for the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, and a former NCBI Co-Chair. She is a reappointment to the task force.
- ***John Bridge (Artificial Intelligence)*** - Bridge is President of government security at Trust Stamp, and has 34 years of law enforcement and military experience, including 25 years with United States Marshals Service. He is a reappointment to the task force.
- ***Faruk Okcetin (Web3)*** – Okcetin is a seasoned entrepreneur starting over 10 different businesses over the last 29 years, currently the Director of Operations at Zeto Inc., a medical device manufacturer. He is a reappointment to the task force.
- ***Jai Arun Singh (Web3 Technology)*** Singh is the co-author of [Blockchain for Business](#), and is an executive with IBM in Research Triangle Park. He is a reappointment to the task force.
- ***Gerald Wilkie (Bitcoin Mining Specialist)*** - Gerald brings over 10 years of mining experience to the task force. He founded HMTech in 2014 when he left the corporate world, and he now runs a 12MW hosting facility in Graham. Out of the same facility they operate the largest ASIC repair facility in North America with certifications from all major manufacturers. He is a new appointment to the task force.
- ***Tobias Barbir (Bitcoin Mining Specialist)*** - Barbir founded the International Bitcoin Mining Museum. He is a new appointment to the task force.

Notable Accomplishments of the North Carolina Blockchain Initiative:

- Developed a series of policy and legislative recommendations designed to promote opportunities for economic growth and cost efficiencies;
- Played a central role in the development and passage of the bipartisan North Carolina Regulatory Sandbox Act of 2021, and creation of the North Carolina [Innovation Council](#)
- Worked to strengthen North Carolina as a leader in technological innovation;

- Conducted two in-depth tours of North Carolina-based bitcoin mining facilities for state and federal officials;
- Hosted an informational blockchain webinar series; and
- Nationally recognized efforts highlighted in [GovTech Magazine](#), [Urban Institute](#), and [the Hill](#)

Updates throughout the process and submissions can be made at <https://ncblockchain.tech/>.

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