



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rep. Spreitzer helps expand funding for rural broadband

MADISON- On May 2, the Wisconsin State Assembly passed legislation that will help bring high-speed internet to rural parts of the state that currently lack access. Assembly Bill 123 (AB 123) draws on work done by last year's Study Committee on Rural Broadband to improve the Broadband Expansion Grant Program. Rep. Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit) was an original co-author of the bill and member of the Study Committee that proposed the ideas.

"Because high speed internet is essential for education, commerce, and everyday life in the 21st century, my duty is to make sure all residents of the 45th Assembly District have access," Rep. Spreitzer said. "This legislation will help build out our broadband infrastructure and help us take another step towards bringing the promise of broadband to all our rural areas."

The Broadband Expansion Grant Program currently allocates \$1.5 million per year to help expand broadband infrastructure. Administered by the Public Service Commission, the program offers matching grants to local units of government or nonprofits that partner with telecommunication companies. That funding came from a one-time \$6 million allocation, and would have eventually run out.

"This legislation will not only add \$15 million more to the program this year, it will also increase long-term funding for future expansion to \$4.5 million per year," Spreitzer added. "We have also added \$7.5 million for the TEACH program, which offers internet service to public and private schools, independent charter schools, technical colleges, and public libraries at discounted rates."

Communities or internet providers must apply to receive funds from the Broadband Expansion Grant Program. Green County Development Corporation is currently working on a grant application. Rep. Spreitzer is reaching out to potential applicants in Rock County to ensure that all rural residents in the 45th District can benefit from this program.

As a member of last year's Study Committee on Rural Broadband, Spreitzer worked with citizens, local units of government, internet providers, and fellow legislators over the course of many months to craft many of the ideas in AB 123.

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