



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

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Senator Howard Marklein Introduces Rural Broadband Bill **To Increase Funding & Expand Assistance Programs**

MADISON - State Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) introduced LRB -2042/1, a collaborative rural broadband expansion bill today that is a combination of the [proposal that was promoted by Governor Scott Walker on December 1, 2016](#) and recommendations made by the 2016 Study Committee on Rural Broadband, which he chaired in 2016.

“This bill is the product of hundreds of hours of hard work and study by many dedicated people in Wisconsin,” Marklein said. “We took the funding ideas from the Governor and combined them with the Rural Broadband Study Committee’s recommendations to produce legislation that will make an immediate, significant impact on rural broadband in Wisconsin.”

LRB -2042/1 is co-authored by Rep. Romaine Quinn (R-Rice Lake) and is part of the Assembly’s Rural Wisconsin Initiative for the 2017-2018 session. The bill is currently in circulation for co-sponsorship through Friday, February 17, 2017.

“The Study Committee on Rural Broadband developed several recommendations for improving the Rural Broadband Expansion Grant program that is administered by the Public Service Commission,” Marklein said. “This bill insures that these ideas are applied to any new grants from the program.”

“In December, the Governor announced the availability of surpluses in other programs that could be used for broadband,” Marklein said. “Combining these funds with the study committee’s recommendations is good policy and I look forward to moving this bill through the legislative process quickly.”

The bill accomplishes the following:

1. Allocates an additional \$15.5 million to the Rural Broadband Expansion Grant Program for additional 2017 grant awards from surplus funds in E-Rate (\$5 million) the Universal Service Fund (USF) (\$6 million) and the unencumbered balances from other USF-funded appropriations (estimate \$4.5 million).
2. Provides the PSC with a requirement that the grants go to the areas of the state with the greatest need. We want to use scarce resources to “fill from the bottom up”.
3. Includes a policy that prevents broadband service providers from “cherry picking” high value customers, while ignoring the needs of residential customers.

4. Directs the PSC, in evaluating grant proposals, to consider the impact of improved broadband on our students at home, and patients at home.
5. Discourages the duplication of existing service. Seeks to supplement the federal CAFII funding in areas not benefitting from the federal money.
6. Adds funding to the Technology for Educational Achievement (TEACH) program and expands the number of rural school districts who are eligible for the program.

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