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DECEMBER 5, 2016
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Rep. Swearingen Praises Governor Walker's Rural Broadband Expansion Bill

Madison, WI – Today, Representative Rob Swearingen (R-Rhineland) released the following statement after Governor Walker called on the legislature to invest an additional \$35.5 million in rural broadband expansion over the course of the next three years.

“I’m pleased that the Governor is looking to partner with the legislature to bring internet access and connectivity to rural areas of the state, including the Northwoods. For the last four years I have worked very hard to make broadband expansion a top priority for our state and having the Governor on board is another win. Increased broadband accessibility will lead to more family sustaining jobs, enhanced educational opportunities, and will prove very beneficial in maintaining our strong tourism industry,” stated Swearingen.

The proposed legislation would appropriate an additional \$35.5 million to programs such as the Broadband Expansion Grant program as well as the Technology for Educational Achievement (TEACH) program for fiscal years 2017, 2018, and 2019. The goal of the TEACH program is to provide money to eligible small and rural school districts to upgrade technology and provide technological training to teachers.

As chairman of the Speaker’s Task Force on Rural Schools and a current member of the Broadband Expansion Stakeholder Group, Representative Swearingen has worked over the last four years with stakeholders at the state and local level to ensure that the growth of broadband remains a focus for the legislature. Since 2014, the 34th Assembly District has received over \$900,000 in Broadband Expansion Grant monies and has been one of the largest recipients of Broadband Expansion Grants throughout the state.

“I would like to thank Governor Walker, the Public Service Commission (PSC), State Broadband Director Angie Dickison, Chief Information Officer of the Division of Enterprise Technology, David Cagial, and all parties that have worked together and remain committed to upgrading these broadband capabilities in rural areas of the state like the Northwoods. I look forward to working with my colleagues this upcoming session to move this bill through the legislative process and to the Governor’s desk,” Swearingen concluded.

The 2017-19 legislative session commences on January 3, 2017.

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