

# Wisconsin Towns Association

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For Immediate Release

December 7, 2016

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## **Governor Walker – PSC Propose High Impact Broadband Investments**

Last week, Governor Walker announced a proposal to accelerate the investment in broadband infrastructure. This will prove a crucial contribution to economic development and vitality across Wisconsin. The Governor's plan would increase funding for expanding broadband to underserved areas by \$35.5 million. This year alone, funding for broadband expansion grants would increase from \$1.5 million to \$15.5 million. The Governor's proposal brings the total investment to enhance broadband to \$52 million.

Additionally, the Public Service Commission's (PSC) announcement to increase funding up to \$46 million for rural energy programs that expand broadband is another exciting opportunity for communities. The plan allocates up to \$26 million in rural programs that combine broadband and energy efficiency.

These investments will have a substantial impact on towns and town residents throughout Wisconsin. Broadband is essential for competing in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and enhances businesses' opportunities to flourish in rural parts of the state. It allows students to do homework assignments at home, rather than traveling to Internet hot-spots miles away, and encourages tourists to stay longer.

Mike Koles, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Towns Association, responded to the dual announcements with this statement.

"In addition to jobs and quality of life, broadband is also critical for community development. When that home based business is in rural Wisconsin, the owner might teach CCD classes at church, volunteer as part of the Lioness Club, coach cheerleading at the school, or teach hunter safety classes. They are the fuel that propels a community to success, and they wouldn't be there without broadband. The combined proposals from the Governor and the PSC are a tremendous investment in that fuel".

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