

Sen. Brown Cheers Groundbreaking Of Project Improving Access To Broadband

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Publish Date: 2011-05-24

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May 23, 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C. –U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) cheered today's groundbreaking of a project that will expand access to broadband for 34 counties in Appalachia. The project would deploy more than 1,900 miles of fiber optic network to over 705,000 households and connect nearly 600 community anchors. The funds were awarded to the Ohio Middle Mile Consortium, which Brown helped to facilitate after he fought to devote \$2.5 billion worth of Recovery Act broadband funding for rural broadband projects. Brown has fought to secure additional funding for broadband investments. During Senate consideration of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), Brown authored an amendment to increase USDA funding by \$2.5 billion to target rural and underserved communities.

"If we want to promote economic development throughout Ohio, we need to ensure that businesses and households have broadband access. Ohio's rural communities have been overlooked for too long, but today's groundbreaking is great news for southeastern Ohio." "Ohio Middle Mile and Horizon's cooperation will help promote economic growth and improve the competitiveness of Ohio communities in underserved areas. This is an investment in the future of our state."

Broadband bridges the digital gap that too often disadvantages rural Ohio - undermining business development and compromising timely access to basic public services like fire, police, and health care. In August 2010, the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Commerce announced that Ohio's Middle Mile Consortium (OMMC), a public-private state-wide partnership, would receive more than \$141 million in total funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for broadband expansion. Horizon Telcom's, Connecting Appalachian Ohio proposal was awarded \$66.5 million in funds to expand broadband access for 34 counties in southeastern Ohio.

In June 2010, Brown wrote to U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Gary Locke in support of the OMMC for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. After the Connecting Appalachia application was denied in the first round of consideration, Brown's office convened a roundtable of stakeholders in preparation for the second round. In March 2010, Brown also wrote to National Telecommunications and Information Administration Assistant Secretary Strickling in support of the OMMC Connecting Appalachia application.

Before the ARRA Act was passed, Brown was integral in bringing together business and community leaders to coordinate a strategy for expansion of broadband. In March 2008, Brown's office hosted a forum in Zanesville where stakeholders throughout Appalachian Ohio spoke to the importance of expanding broadband.

Brown sponsored the Rural Broadband Act that would establish a federal Office of Broadband Initiatives dedicated to creating a comprehensive rural broadband strategic vision and increasing access to the Internet in rural parts of the United States.

According to an analysis released by the National



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Economic Council last year, overall Recovery Act investments in broadband are expected to create tens of thousands of jobs in the near term and expand economic development and job opportunities in communities that would otherwise be left behind in the new knowledge-based economy. Upon passage of the Recovery Act in 2009, Brown convened a day-long workshop among potential broadband applicants and brought U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Undersecretary Dallas Tonsager to Ohio to discuss the application process and encourage local collaboration and partnerships.



With new or increased broadband access, communities will be able to compete on a level playing field to attract new businesses; schools can create distance learning opportunities; medical professionals can provide cost-efficient remote diagnoses and care, and business owners can expand the market for their products beyond their neighborhoods to better compete in the global economy. The investments will create jobs in the short term and help establish a new foundation for long-term economic growth.

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