

Governor Seeks Better Broadband Coverage for State

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin

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<http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/internet-rural-s5.jpg>



Gov. Evers secures advantage for Wisconsin Citizens applying for USDA's ReConnect Program.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today sent a letter to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Sec. Sonny Perdue in support of Gov. Evers' administration's goal of providing reliable and affordable broadband service to all Wisconsin citizens.

Gov. Evers' budget proposes an historic investment in broadband grant funding, which is to be targeted to those parts of the state that are unserved or underserved by reliable internet access. The governor's budget proposes a \$78 million investment in the state's Broadband Expansion Grant Program, which quadruples the amount previously provided for this program critical to the economic and educational success of Wisconsin citizens.

Upon taking office, the governor charged his agencies to connect the dots on important issues like broadband service to ensure the state is maximizing its efforts. The Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) have been doing just that to ensure Wisconsin rural residents are well positioned to benefit from both federal and state broadband funds.

"Access to reliable broadband service is critical to the livelihood of our rural economy, education of our youth, and access to vital public safety services," said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Valcq said. "We will work to access every single dollar to expand broadband in Wisconsin."

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One such opportunity the agencies identified is ensuring Wisconsin rural residents are poised to be the most qualified applicants for the inaugural round of USDA's ReConnect Program funds. Applicants receive 20 additional points if their states have taken actions demonstrating support for broadband service.

The letter from Gov. Evers is a key part of securing this advantage, as well as the PSC's publication of Wisconsin's Broadband Plan, which can be accessed here: <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/WBO.aspx>

The Wisconsin Broadband Office, which is housed at the PSC, will provide additional support and guidance to ReConnect Program applicants to ensure the greatest chance of being awarded USDA funding.