

Sen. Marklein: Rural Broadband Expansion Funding Folded Into State Budget

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CONTACT: SENATOR MARKLEIN

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JFC takes action after political games delay bill in the Senate

MADISON – State Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) moved Budget Motion #99 to fold the content of Senate Bill (SB) 49 and Assembly Bill (AB) 123, bills to invest \$11 million more into the Rural Broadband Expansion Grant Program into the state budget after political games killed both versions of the bill on the Senate floor on two different occasions.

“I have been working on Rural Broadband Expansion for the better part of two years. Expanding broadband to the rural parts of our state is one of my top priorities,” Marklein said. “These bi-partisan bills are good policy and widely supported. Unfortunately, political games have killed these bills on the Senate floor twice.”

“Some Democrat legislators decided to tack an unrelated initiative onto a popular bill. As a result, the bill died,” Marklein said. “I am disappointed that we were not able to deploy these funds quickly, as we had hoped to do, but I am proud to report that we have successfully added the funding and criteria changes into the state budget proposal with unanimous bi-partisan support.”

“While these political games have set us back several months, I am confident the

funding and expansion will happen,” Marklein said. “We have also added structure for future funding for Rural Broadband Expansion Grants. I know there are communities poised to apply and I appreciate their patience as we continue to work past silly political obstacles. It is frustrating and disappointing.”

Motion #99 invests approximately \$14 million into Rural Broadband Expansion Grants in 2017-18 and a future stream of funding for at least \$2 million per year. It also incorporates the hard work of the Rural Broadband Study Committee into the administration of the grant program.