

Opportunity Wisconsin: Broadband insecurity exacerbated by President Trump's failed leadership and broken promises

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. — On Tuesday, as Wisconsin broke a new state record for the number of newly confirmed COVID-19 cases in a single day, [Opportunity Wisconsin](#) hosted [a virtual discussion \[DOWNLOAD\]](#) with Badger State residents and community leaders focused on the Trump administration's failure to address the broadband access crisis across Wisconsin. The group was joined in conversation by Brittany Beyer, Chair of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access.

Earlier in the day, Opportunity Wisconsin welcomed Vice President Mike Pence to Waukesha [with a mobile billboard](#) highlighting the administration's failure to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Waukesha physician Dr. Peter Geiss, [joined the billboard and shared a message for President Trump and Vice President Pence](#), "The people of Wisconsin are suffering. If we want to improve the economy, we have to get a handle on the pandemic. Their leadership is failing."

Participants in Tuesday's conversation echoed similar sentiments, noting the Trump administration has failed in providing leadership on improving Badger State residents' access to high speed internet.

"COVID-19 has shown that [broadband] is an absolute necessity, we have to solve it in the framework that is possible and that happens to be infrastructure buildout. That means that we really need to be making a case that this is part of the solutions

going forward,” [\[WATCH\]](#) said Beyer. “It’s way beyond the time we should’ve solved it, but we’re going to show good faith measures by being able to turn to one another and it’s a shame we can’t turn to our federal government as a partner inside of this, but that’s what we’re hoping to get.” [\[WATCH\]](#)

410,000 Wisconsinites do not have any access to broadband internet. 836,000 Wisconsinites have access to only one provider. Under President Trump, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has spent \$80.9 million on various rural broadband expansion programs in Wisconsin – but that’s only a fraction of the estimated \$1 billion it will cost to get rural Wisconsin updated and competitive for the 21st Century.

“You can look at lack of access to high speed internet in a few different capacities.” said Becca Cooke, Executive Director, Red Letter Grant and member of the Opportunity Wisconsin Steering Committee. “Obviously, It hurts our students and our education system, we look at it in how it hurts small businesses and access to marketplaces, but then also from the health perspective, with telemedicine and already rural communities having a physician shortage crisis where there aren’t providers in a lot of small towns. So they’re focusing on telemedicine but how can you get to a telemedicine appointment if you can’t access the internet?” [\[WATCH\]](#)

President Trump has portrayed himself as a pro-business and pro-jobs and economy president. As part of his economic promises, President Trump guaranteed Americans \$550 billion towards revitalizing neglected and deteriorating American infrastructure – part of which could have gone toward improving internet access in Wisconsin. After nearly four years in office, we’ve seen no movement on that promise which has left Wisconsin communities behind and out of 21st century access to resources.

“[President Trump] doesn’t understand that people really have problems, is my perspective. I think though as Wisconsinites, we’re just going to have to figure out how to come up with that. It has to be central, it can’t be a piecemeal approach, somebody has to be in charge,” said Kaye Ortman-Peters, a retired teacher from Highbridge, Wisconsin. [\[WATCH\]](#)