

Sen. Marklein: CARES Act funds for broadband expansion grants

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Madison, WI – Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) released the following statement regarding Governor Tony Evers’ decision to dedicate \$5 million of Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to the Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant program:

“I am grateful that Governor Tony Evers heard my call to dedicate a portion of the CARES Act funding Wisconsin received from the Federal government to broadband expansion. The \$5 million infusion into the Rural Broadband Expansion Grant program for projects that will connect people before the end of 2020 is a very good use of these funds.

When I reached out to the Governor in July about this idea, I received a response that indicated he was not planning to take this action. However, I am very pleased to see that he reconsidered and is taking steps toward expanding broadband. I am hopeful that the Public Service Commission (PSC) will choose to fund projects in rural Wisconsin where the need is extreme.

I constantly hear from my constituents about the need for broadband expansion. COVID-19 has reinforced the desperate needs in our communities for students and people working from home. Rural Wisconsin needs to be connected.”

[PDF of Marklein’s letter to Governor Evers – July 22, 2020 – attached](#)

[PDF of Governor Evers’ Response – July 28, 2020 – attached](#)

Marklein chaired the Legislative Council Study Committee on Rural Broadband in 2016, which identified a stable stream of funding, identified other funding options and fine-tuned criteria and processes to deploy Rural Broadband Expansion Grants

where it is most needed.

He led these changes in the 2017-18 Budget and secured \$14 million for grants, including a stable funding source of \$2 million every biennium ongoing. In the 2019-20 State Budget, Marklein led the investment of \$48 million for Rural Broadband Expansion Grants. He also authored and passed several pieces of legislation to support broadband expansion including 2015 Act 278, 2017 Act 342 and 2019 Act 128.

Sen. Marklein was recently appointed to the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access.