

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Introduces bill to sustain rural broadband connectivity during coronavirus pandemic

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Kevin Cramer (R-ND), along with Tina Smith (D-MN), Dan Sullivan (R-AK), Steve Daines (R-MT), Doug Jones (D-AL), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Jon Tester (D-MT), John Barrasso (R-WY), Pat Roberts (R-KS), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Todd Young (R-IN), and Gary Peters (D-MI), introduced the bipartisan *Keeping Critical Connections Act* to help small broadband providers ensure rural broadband connectivity for students and their families during the coronavirus pandemic.

“Reliable high-speed broadband is necessary for helping our small businesses and rural communities get through the coronavirus pandemic,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “This legislation will help ensure that families and students in Wisconsin have access to broadband during this public health emergency—no matter where they live.”

“Access to high speed internet is critical for students and their families during the coronavirus outbreak,” **said Senator Klobuchar.** “The *Keeping Critical Connections Act* would help small broadband providers continue offering free or discounted broadband services to families and students in rural areas to ensure they remain connected to school, work, and their communities during this period of economic turmoil caused by the coronavirus pandemic.”

“The federal government asked this essential industry to keep providing assistance to people during COVID—19, and they answered the call,” **said Senator Cramer.** “The least we can do is make sure they are made whole when this pandemic is over.”

The *Keeping Critical Connections Act* would appropriate \$2 billion for a Keeping Critical Connections fund at the FCC under which small broadband providers with fewer than 250,000 customers could be compensated for broadband services—if they provided free or discounted broadband services or upgrades—during the pandemic for low-income families who could not afford to pay their bills or provided distance learning capability for students.

The bill is endorsed by NTCA—the Rural Broadband Association, WTA – Advocates for Rural Broadband, Wireless Internet Service Providers Association (WISPA), the Minnesota Telecommunications Alliance, and the Broadband Association of North Dakota (BAND).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).