

U.S. Sens. Baldwin, Smith, Rounds, Fischer: Launch new Senate bipartisan rural working group

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Tina Smith (D-MN), Mike Rounds (R-SD) and Deb Fischer (R-NE)—leaders of the Bipartisan Senate Rural Working Group—hosted a kickoff event with rural leaders and stakeholders in Washington to launch the new Senate working group.

The group aims to identify successful ideas and partnerships to spur efforts to restore economic prosperity in rural communities across the country. The group will also connect people and organizations with ties to rural communities who want to help address the many unique challenges that often hit rural areas hard.

“Rural communities can’t be left behind and Washington must do a better job of helping them move forward. We need to do more to support the family farmers that drive the rural economy forward,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “The federal government needs to step up and make investments that will expand rural broadband access, rebuild water infrastructure, increase affordable housing opportunities and support rural health facilities that are on the frontlines of the opioid epidemic. I’m excited to work with my colleagues to launch the new Bipartisan Rural Working Group to find common ground on solutions that will show rural America that Washington is working with them, and for them.”

“I’ve been to rural communities and Tribal areas across Minnesota, and I’ve seen how leaders and organizations are coming together to do unique and innovative things to not only create jobs and economic development, but also tackle local problems,” **said Senator Smith.** “At a time when you often only hear about the economic hardship in rural communities, I’ve been inspired by the spirit, resilience,

and ingenuity of the people I've met in rural areas of Minnesota. I was so inspired that I decided to create a bipartisan Senate group aimed at highlighting what's working in rural America, and I'm pleased to be joined by my colleagues and dozens of advocates who share that same goal."

"South Dakota is a large, rural state. The Bipartisan Rural Working Group seeks to address the unique challenges facing rural areas, including reliable energy sources, adequate rural water systems, safe roads and bridges and access to services such as high-speed internet, essential air service, quality education, health care and lending services. I look forward to working with Sens. Smith, Fischer and Baldwin to advance the priorities of rural America in the Senate," **said Senator Rounds.**

"The heartland is not flyover country. It's full of wonderful, selfless people who help feed and fuel the world. Those of us who live in rural America already know this, but we need to show Washington that our families, communities, innovators, and businesses are worth the investment. I am excited to participate in this bipartisan working group to develop solutions for rural America," **said Senator Fischer.**