

U.S. Sens. Baldwin, Ernst: Reintroduce bipartisan legislation to protect and expand rural internet access

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Joni Ernst (R-IA) reintroduced bipartisan legislation to protect and expand access to high-speed internet in our rural communities and encourage investment in rural broadband. The legislation is also cosponsored by Senators Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) and Kevin Cramer (R-ND).

The *Access to Capital Creates Economic Strength and Supports (ACCESS) Rural America Act* would provide regulatory relief to rural telecommunications service providers by allowing them to submit streamlined financial reports to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). These small companies—many of which are the sole service providers in their region—could be put out of business by looming regulatory costs. Specifically, this bipartisan legislation would increase the number of investors that triggers SEC public reporting requirements for rural telecommunications companies. This will save these small companies from costly SEC reporting requirements that were never intended for them.

“Reliable high-speed broadband is essential to Wisconsin families, students, small businesses, and farmers. Unfortunately, rural telecom companies are getting hit with costly reporting fees that are intended for much larger companies, threatening to upend their business and stop the vital service they provide to their communities,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “This bipartisan legislation will ease the burdensome regulations for small broadband service providers, helping our efforts to ensure that all Wisconsinites have access to high speed internet, regardless of

where they live.”

“Federal Securities and Exchange Commission registration and reporting requirements intended for larger, publicly-traded firms pose significant challenges for, and can impose substantial burdens on, smaller, locally-owned companies with limited resources. NTCA therefore greatly appreciates the leadership of Sens. Tammy Baldwin, Joni Ernst, Kyrsten Sinema, and Kevin Cramer in introducing the ACCESS Rural America Act, which will help relieve these burdens and enable small providers to focus more on their core mission of deploying and operating advanced broadband networks in rural areas,” **said Shirley Bloomfield, CEO of NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association.**

The legislation is supported by the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association.

Full text of the legislation is available [here](#).