

U.S. Rep. Tiffany: Reintroduces bipartisan legislation to expand rural broadband access

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WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Reps. Tom Tiffany (WI-07), Eric Sorensen (IL-17), and Glenn Grothman (WI-06) reintroduced legislation to expand broadband access in rural areas across the United States.

The *ACCESS Rural America Act* would allow smaller, locally owned broadband providers to streamline U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's (SEC) registration and reporting requirements. By increasing the number of investors that prompt the SEC public reporting requirements, rural broadband providers will no longer be hamstrung by additional federal regulations intended for large corporations.

*"Instead of being able to supply rural America with high-speed broadband networks, our local providers are caught up in Washington's bureaucratic red tape," **said Congressman Tiffany.** "This bipartisan bill will give small broadband providers the tools to expand quality internet access across rural America."*

*"Excessive regulations make it difficult for small and locally owned providers to expand internet access in our rural communities," **said Congressman Sorensen.** "By revising laws intended for big corporations, this bipartisan effort helps bridge the digital divide and connects Illinois families to jobs and economic opportunity."*

"Small, locally owned broadband providers need to devote valuable time and resources to building networks and delivering high-quality services to consumers in rural America rather than complying with burdensome securities registration and

reporting requirements meant for large publicly traded companies,” **NTCA CEO Shirley Bloomfield said.** “We thank Representatives Tom Tiffany and Eric Sorensen for introducing the bipartisan ACCESS Rural America Act to help relieve these burdens, so small providers can focus on their mission of connecting and serving all Americans.”

“WSTA member companies want to focus on expanding their fiber-based broadband networks in rural Wisconsin...and Congressman Tiffany is helping make that happen,” **said Bill Esbeck, executive director of the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association.** “With the ACCESS Rural America Act, Congressman Tiffany is eliminating unnecessary and burdensome regulations that distract our providers from their core mission of broadband expansion. Congressman Tiffany has been a champion of rural broadband expansion for years. The ACCESS Rural America Act is just the most recent example of his work to connect rural Wisconsin with robust broadband service.”

“Lakeland Communications and other rural broadband providers are extremely pleased and optimistic that Congressman Tiffany can lead to effect long overdue change to a 20-year-old law of Sarbanes Oxley that shackles community based broadband providers. Much of rural Wisconsin and the nation need state-of-the-art fiber optic network access that we could possibly provide if we were not under the additional burdens of SEC and the costly restrictions of federal regulations that we have endured for 20 years. We hope and pray that Congressman Tiffany and his colleagues will be successful in this needed legislation to provide beneficial relief,” **said John K. Klatt President, CEO Lakeland Communications.**

Background:

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act was signed into law in 2002 and established extensive regulations for companies. Due to the broad-brush approach that this law created, many smaller, locally owned providers are burdened by enhanced SEC registration and reporting requirements. For example, if a small telecommunications company in Wisconsin is helping deploy networks in rural areas but has 500 or more not-accredited shareholders, then it must comply with the regulations set forth by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and spend substantial amounts of money and resources on these reporting requirements to the SEC every year. The ACCESS Rural America Act would increase the number of investors that prompts the SEC public reporting requirements from 500 to 2,000 persons for rural broadband companies receiving federal universal service support. This will help alleviate pressure on many

businesses helping bridge the digital divide across America.

The full text of the *ACCESS Rural America Act* can be found [here](#).