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## **Assembly Republicans Propose Historic Investment in Broadband Access**

**MADISON** – When the state Assembly convenes for its April floor period on Tuesday, the chamber is expected to pass a package of Republican-led legislation that, among other things, calls for \$500 million in broadband services. Authored by Representative Rob Summerfield (R-Bloomer), [Assembly Bill 239](#) would designate a portion of the expected \$5 billion Wisconsin is set to receive as a part of the federal American Rescue Plan to invest in expanded broadband access to unserved areas of the state.

“Wisconsin needs an ambitious, bold plan to ensure our state can remain competitive in the coming decades. With significant portions of rural residents lacking access to basic high-speed internet services, we need to take action now to connect our state and bolster our economy,” said Rep. Summerfield. “Assembly Bill 239 would not only be a down payment on expanding broadband access, but it would also be an investment for future generations to come.”

According to a November 2020 report by Forward Analytics, nearly 25% of the state – 430,000 Wisconsinites – lack access to high-speed internet. Assembly Republicans know this is an important issue for rural parts of the state, investing \$44 million to broadband expansion grants in the last budget. Over the last year, with Wisconsinites working, communicating, learning, and receiving healthcare virtually, the importance for everyone in the state to have high-speed internet access has only grown.

“It’s not a surprise that Governor Evers didn’t go far enough when outlining his plans for broadband expansion, as urban hubs like Milwaukee and Madison have nearly full access to high-speed internet,” said Majority Leader Jim Steineke (R-Kaukauna). “Assembly Republicans are advocating for our rural areas who are in need of this critical infrastructure.”

In his 2021 virtual state of the state speech, Governor Evers declared 2021 “the year of broadband access.” With Assembly Bill 239 receiving a vote in the state Assembly at tomorrow’s floor date, Assembly Republicans are directing the Governor to make good on that promise.

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