



Extending Internet access to all

GOVERNMENT POLICY SHOULD SUPPORT EXPANSION OF BROADBAND SERVICE

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By Dan Logsdon

America is at a crossroads. We have the opportunity to expand the reach of broadband technology to all Americans. In the process, we can unleash the next generation of high-speed Internet, which holds incredible potential for enhancing the lives of Kentuckians and our economy.

Windstream Communications employs 770 people in Kentucky and has a proud legacy of serving mostly rural customers in 48 of its 120 counties. Nearly 80 percent of our Kentucky customers are able to receive our high-speed broadband services, and we are committed to continue providing them the benefits of broadband technology.

This investment will lay the groundwork for delivering life-enhancing services to our citizens.

Consider that broadband technology can make possible:

- Remote health monitoring of patients with chronic illnesses that could save lives while reducing soaring health care expenses by about 25 percent, or an estimated \$350 billion annually.
- Enhanced telecommuting options that deliver \$3.9 billion in annual time and fuel-cost savings while reducing traffic, greenhouse gas emissions and dependence on foreign oil.
- New distance-learning opportunities that connect teachers with students anywhere in the world for Web-based instruction and videoconferencing.
- Peace of mind for senior citizens by offering more sophisticated means of staying in touch, accessing medical care, shopping and paying bills from home.

All this and more is being made possible thanks to the more than 1,270 companies across the country, like Windstream, that are investing in the nation's broadband infrastructure.

In addition, Windstream stands alongside agencies like ConnectKentucky, a public-private partnership dedicated to expanding access to broadband and accelerating the growth of technology in support of communities throughout state.

With these types of commitments, the broadband market is growing more competitive and diverse to the great benefit of our economy and consumers, who are experiencing lower prices and better service.

According to estimates by the New Millennium Research Council, universal broadband will create 1.2 million U.S. jobs and \$500 billion in U.S. economic opportunities. To keep pace with the demand for innovation, significant new broadband investment will be required to extend and enhance the high-speed Internet's reach in many parts of the country.

Popular new applications are requiring unprecedented amounts of capacity on the nation's broadband networks. The popular YouTube, for example, while only a couple of years old, consumes as much bandwidth as the entire Internet did in the year 2000. The demand for bandwidth will only accelerate as more and more video-based innovations come online. Ongoing investment will be essential to maximize the consumer benefits of new generations of broadband.

Our industry is up to the challenge. But we need lawmakers, who shape the nation's public policy, to share our goal of extending broadband's reach to all Americans: working families, students, health care providers, and small and large businesses.

Expanding loans to deploy broadband into high-cost rural areas, for instance, could dramatically improve the lives of people in these communities by linking them to advanced health care and education opportunities, as well as new jobs and economic growth.

We have only begun to realize the potential of broadband, and universal deployment is within reach so long as we have leaders in government and private industry who are committed to innovative policies and robust investment that will deliver the power of the Internet to all Americans.

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<http://www.kentucky.com/589/story/56684.html>