

Charleston Daily Mail

DAILYMAIL.COM

Rockefeller Announces \$8.4 Million Award To Help Health Care Providers

November 30, 2007

Senator Jay Rockefeller's office announced approval of a three-year award from the FCC for the West Virginia Telehealth Alliance to improve health care for rural residents.

The award is \$2.8 million a year for the next three years to allow the alliance to establish a statewide broadband network to provide telehealth services for West Virginians.

The announcement took place in Morgantown, where Rockefeller was joined by Federal Communication Chairman Kevin J. Martin.

"Just imagine, our rural health care centers will become hospitals without walls - each of them with access to the best health care professionals in the state," Rockefeller said.

"Doctors, hospitals, health centers and clinics will be able to deliver services more efficiently, share critical health information in real time, decrease medical errors and reduce hospital stays.

Martin added, "Furthering broadband deployment across the nation is a top priority for the commission; it drives economic growth and can improve the quality and access to health care. With this program, we are taking a major step toward the goal of connection the nation's health care facilities with one another through broadband telehealth networks for the benefit of patients, including those in West Virginia."

With the grant money and advancements in telehealth, patients will be able to access critically-needed medical specialists in a variety of practices - including cardiology, pediatrics and radiology - without leaving their homes or communities.

Use of the technologies has been shown to reduce hospital stays and the costs of medical care, as well as facilitate transmission of emergency medical records among doctors and health care facilities.

The West Virginia Telehealth Alliance is also expected to become a clearinghouse of information and ideas between medical professionals in the state.

The money comes from the FCC's newly-established Rural Health Pilot Project, which will pay 85 percent of the project cost and the state will pay the remaining 15 percent.

Rockefeller also was joined for the announcement by West Virginia University President Mike Garrison; Larry Malone, who is chairman of the West Virginia Telehealth Alliance, Dave Campbell, who is the CEO of the Community Health Network of West Virginia; and Dr. Julian Bailes, who is chairman of the West Virginia Health Information Network.