



## **Broadband initiative signed into law**

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LITTLETON -- A broadband initiative to expand service in New Hampshire's three northernmost counties got a \$686,000 boost this week, after an omnibus appropriations bill was signed into law. In an announcement by U.S. Sens. Judd Gregg and John Sununu, R- N.H., the federal funding now approved will get started work on an open-access, fixed, wireless broadband infrastructure throughout Carroll, Grafton and Coos Counties, bringing the region much-needed capabilities to expand economic growth.

Last summer, Gregg said bringing broadband access to the largely rural region has been a challenge because of low population, mountainous terrain, variable weather conditions and the lack of return on the costly investment. "Significant geographic and infrastructure challenges exist in expanding wireless broadband," Sununu said, "however, the Northern Community Investment Corp. and Littleton Industrial Development Corp. have demonstrated a commitment and ability to overcome obstacles." The Littleton Industrial Corp. and the Northern Community Investment Corp. have spearheaded the drive to bring and expand broadband. Although available in some areas, many rural communities would not otherwise see development without financial aid.

Officials last summer noted that while 1 mB cost about \$30 per month in New York City, the same service in the North Country would cost \$150 per month. Jon Freeman, president of NCIC, said the federal funding is critical in expanding the infrastructure, where there has recently been significant job loss from multiple paper mill closings. This project is a cornerstone of establishing what will be a new and vibrant economy created across the North Country, through the exciting opportunities offered to business, visitors, health care, first responders and education," he said.

The funding approved this week will be used primarily for the design, acquisition and construction of the network. "The Internet is a critical tool in today's society," Gregg said. "It aids people in almost every facet of everyday life, from entertainment and personal communication to research and business transactions. To date, much of the North Country has been unable to access the Internet at high speeds." Completing the project, he said, will insure that the North Country will have a competitive advantage.