

CAPITO CONNECT

Capito Connect Plan

High-speed internet access is a pillar of our 21st Century infrastructure and a gateway to economic growth in rural America. High tech businesses and online startups can power our small communities and bring limitless opportunity to the Mountain State.

Unfortunately, for all the potential benefits that broadband can offer to rural America, not having this important service can place an almost insurmountable barrier to economic development. Small communities across West Virginia lack this fundamental infrastructure – and lack access to vital opportunities as a result. A recent study by the Federal Communications Commission indicates that 56 percent of West Virginia residents do not have access to broadband services that meet its benchmarks. In rural areas of the state, this number is an even higher 74 percent. West Virginia cannot attract and retain businesses if we are not connected, and we cannot succeed if we do not have the tools necessary to compete.

When I was sworn into the Senate, I outlined my top priorities for strengthening West Virginia. Improving broadband is at the top of that list. Better connecting West Virginia through increased broadband access is imperative if we are going to compete and thrive going forward.

My Capito Connect plan outlines three steps for achieving this goal:

1. Understanding the Benefits of a Connected West Virginia

By listening to our communities, we can build a West Virginia-specific plan for achieving widespread broadband that meets the unique demands of our state.

2. Fostering Collaboration between Government and the Private Sector

Broadband access will be the result of partnerships between private, local, state and federal agencies and organizations. Fostering collaboration will help eliminate duplicate and outdated programs so that West Virginia can efficiently deliver broadband services to communities.

3. Promoting Economic Growth through Innovation

Broadband should be easily available and affordable for all West Virginians. This will require creative solutions to accommodate broadband users across all sectors, including schools, businesses and private citizens. Through innovative thinking and implementation, West Virginia will achieve the connectivity that will help boost our economy.

The Capito Connect Plan is a roadmap for bringing affordable, high-speed internet access to every home, business and classroom in West Virginia.

Along with this plan, I am launching a listening tour to hear from individuals and organizations around the state about how to best tackle this challenge. I encourage all West Virginians to share their broadband story with me by attending one of these listening sessions, submitting a comment on my website or writing to my office.

Improving broadband in a rural state like West Virginia is no small task. It will require time, investment and cooperation between the businesses community and all levels of government. Together, we can tackle this challenge and seize the potential broadband has to offer West Virginia.