

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 26, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to express my concern with recent press reports of a lack of dedicated broadband infrastructure funding in your administration's forthcoming infrastructure package, and I request that any package you propose include funds specifically for increasing broadband access in underserved areas, particularly in rural America. While the United States has many competing infrastructure needs, broadband access is an increasingly essential service in the modern era, and a lack of access disproportionately impacts rural Americans. Without broadband, rural residents are at multiple disadvantages compared to Americans living in urban and suburban areas.

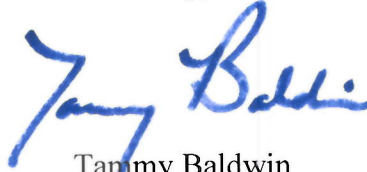
High-speed internet access is essential in Americans' day-to-day lives. Businesses need high-speed broadband to participate in national and international commerce; students need access for online classes and homework; families use it to connect with loved ones far away; and farmers can use broadband in advanced equipment to plant and fertilize crops more efficiently. The current widespread lack of broadband in rural communities creates economic and educational barriers for rural Americans.

Wisconsin is facing severe broadband challenges, and approximately 43 percent of rural Wisconsinites lack broadband access. I have travelled across Wisconsin to hear from my constituents about their broadband needs and the challenges they have faced in accessing this critical service. Over and over again, I have heard how a lack of broadband access has made it harder for rural communities to keep young people and to attract new residents. I have also heard how advances in government and healthcare designed to serve Wisconsinites better – like online benefits applications and telemedicine – simply do not work for places that do not have the connectivity to support them. In community after community, I have been told that opportunities for economic growth pass them by because broadband investments are simply not being made.

Given this discrepancy between need and access, we must urgently find a solution for this pressing problem. An infrastructure proposal presents a crucial opportunity to address this challenge and connect millions of rural Americans to the nation and world. Without dedicated funding included in an infrastructure package, we would miss this crucial opportunity to connect millions of rural Americans to the nation and world.

I strongly support prioritizing broadband expansion by including dedicated funding in any infrastructure package. Thank you for your consideration of this request and attention to providing equal opportunities for broadband access to all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tammy" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Baldwin".

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

CC: Ajit Pai, Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
Sonny Perdue, Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture
Wilbur Ross, Secretary, United States Department of Commerce