

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 13, 2006

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in sponsoring S. 1294, the Community Broadband Act, which we introduced on June 23, 2005. This bill would ensure that any town, city, or county that wishes to offer high-speed Internet services to its residents can do so, as long as it does not discriminate in favor of itself. We are pleased to already be joined in this effort by Senators Coleman, Feingold, Graham and Kerry and invite you to join us in an effort to provide all Americans with affordable high speed access to the World Wide Web.

Several newspapers have endorsed the concept of allowing municipalities the right to offer high-speed Internet services. *USA Today* rightfully questions, "Why shouldn't citizens be able to use their own resources to help themselves?" *The Washington Post* expresses hope that the offering of high-speed Internet services by municipalities will spread. The *San Jose Mercury News* writes that a ban on localities' ability to offer such services is "bad for consumers, bad for technology and bad for America's hopes of catching up to other countries in broadband deployment." Finally, the *Tampa Tribune* implores Federal and State legislators not to "prohibit local elected officials from providing a service their communities need."

Municipal broadband systems can provide numerous benefits to Americans besides simply allowing them to "surf the web." Such systems can be used for communications by public safety professionals such as police and fire fighters and to assist other city employees with their duties. Hurricane Katrina proved that it is essential to have multiple, redundant means of communication, including wireless technology, in place to help first responders better react in catastrophic emergencies. New Orleans police and fire fighters began using a wireless mesh network for emergency communications after the city's telecommunications infrastructure was destroyed and the city has now announced that it will prepare for future emergencies by building its own wireless mesh network. New Orleans is not alone; over 200 cities and towns in the United States plan to deploy community networks over the next year, and 99 municipalities already have some kind of system in place.

By preserving the ability of local governments to develop these types of community broadband networks, this important legislation will help promote economic development, enhance public safety, increase educational opportunities, and improve the lives of Americans that either do not have access to broadband or live in a location where the cost for broadband is simply not affordable. Government must not stand in the way of such an opportunity. We ask you to join us in our effort to allow further municipal broadband deployment by cosponsoring S. 1294, the Community Broadband Act of 2005. If you would like to join as a co-sponsor or have questions about this legislation please contact Doug Mehan on Senator Lautenberg's staff at 224-3224 or Lee Carosi Dunn on Senator McCain's staff at 224-2235.

Sincerely,


FRANK R. LAUTENBERG


JOHN MCCAIN