



NEWS RELEASE



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Sen. Mike DeWine, Rural Development Sponsor Ohio Broadband Conference

April 18 Event Emphasizes Funding, Eligibility and Leadership Awareness

COLUMBUS, OHIO, April 18, 2006 – U.S. Sen. Mike DeWine and Ohio's USDA Rural Development office sponsored a statewide Telecommunications Conference focusing on improving Broadband accessibility for Ohio's rural communities. The conference is a part of a national \$2 billion initiative designed to increase development and deployment of Broadband technology throughout America's rural communities.

"We've been looking in depth at this issue and are committed to assembling the resources, professional networks and community leaders," said Senator DeWine. "Working with Rural Development to sponsor this conference helps highlight available funding, improve technological awareness and explain program assistance."

The Broadband Program provides loans and loan guarantees for the cost of construction, improvement, and acquisition of facilities and equipment for broadband service in eligible rural communities. More than 50 applications have been approved nationally totaling more than \$824 million. Approximately 70 percent of approved applications went to existing businesses while 30 percent went to start-ups

At 37 percent, Fiber to the Home accounted for the larger share of approved Broadband technologies, followed by DSL service at 23 percent and Wireless service at 21 percent. The approval process has become more efficient and involves approximately four months from initial application to final committee approval.

"This is one of the key program servicing areas Rural Development wants to focus on," said Rural Development State Director Randy Hunt. "Rural communities represent areas that are comparatively underserved by Broadband high-speed internet. We hope this workshop/conference helps to educate rural community leaders and service providers, and facilitate their understanding of the economic and quality of life benefits access this technology provides."

For more information about the conference contact Michael Jones, USDA Rural Development Public Affairs Director at (614)255-2394 email at michael.jones@oh.usda.gov, Karen Sloan at 740-373-2317 or Scott Corbett at 614-469-5186, both are representatives from Sen. Mike DeWine's office.

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