

FEATURE – EFFORT TO BRING BROADBAND TO RURAL AMERICA

INTRO: A recent report highlights the U-S Department of Agriculture's ongoing efforts to bring broadband internet access to rural America. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more. (1:31)

PROJECTS TO BRING BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS TO RURAL AREAS THROUGH THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT ARE UNDERWAY. AGRICULTURE SECRETARY TOM VILSACK SAYS THE PROJECTS WILL BRING BROADBAND TO AN AREA THE SIZE OF CALIFORNIA.

Tom Vilsack, Agriculture Secretary: Sixty eight separate projects have been funded and we believe it will help well over half a million households and nearly ninety three thousand businesses and about thirty three anchor institutions like schools, libraries, community centers have access to internet and access to broadband.

VILSACK SAYS BRINGING BROADBAND TO RURAL AMERICA WILL HELP REVITALIZE PARTS OF THE COUNTRY SIMILAR TO FEDERAL EFFORTS DURING THE NEW DEAL.

Vilsack: Some folks have compared what we're doing with broadband as the twenty first century rural electrification effort during the Depression. And to a great extent it is. It's about bringing that infrastructure that's critical to progress to the countryside. Without it rural America will be left behind as it would have been if we hadn't been involved in providing power and electricity to rural America.

VILSACK SAYS BROADBAND ACCESS WILL HELP FARMERS AND RURAL BUSINESSES BY GIVING THEM FASTER ACCESS TO NEEDED INFORMATION.

Vilsack: There are farmers and ranchers that need access to this information so they can make real time decisions about markets, about weather, about planting. All of which could make a big difference in terms of their family's income.

VILSACK SAYS THERE WILL BE MORE ANNOUNCEMENTS THIS SUMMER ABOUT RECOVERY ACT FUNDING FOR RURAL BROADBAND EXPANSION. IN WASHINGTON D-C FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE I'M BOB ELLISON.