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USDA

Instead of helping the development of rural broadband and the "inclusiveness" that high-speed broadband can develop; the rules changes and quite frankly the budget changes have crippled anything that the government truly could have done to aid in rural development.

The Federal Government does not hesitate to spend billions on one new aircraft, but fails miserably when it comes to a program that can positively impact both today's economy and tomorrow's leadership that is still in school across our nation.

In Illinois alone when we were asked to have projects that were "shovel-ready, create jobs and improve rural broadband; the money went to the State University and to the State "Middle-Mile" provider. If you do even a cursory look at the results you will find that the money was certainly spent, few jobs were created and the quality of broadband delivery was not significantly improved by those dollars expended.

Our message therefore is quite simple. The program as it exists today at the budget projected is doomed. There will be no impact of a positive nature because of Farm Bill 2014 for the rural broadband community. What changes will be made will come from "scratching and clawing" from private funding at a time when such funding is lacking without true support. Gaining funding in the rural marketplace is difficult at best and the providers that can invest are doing so on a "cherry-pick" basis. There is no attempt to provide ubiquitous services to this market and that is a shame.

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