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In this world, there are things one simply cannot live without, the obvious being food, water, and shelter. Over time, other items have become nearly as vital. For example, access to broadband internet has quickly risen to necessity status. Due to the importance of broadband internet and the challenges of providing access, the government need to enact policies that ensure every citizen has broadband internet access.

The availability and quality of broadband internet access is a factor that affects the lives of all citizens, young and old. Increasingly, schools are incorporating online resources into their curriculum. For instance, my sophomore English class was centered on a large research project that was primarily completed online. Since we live in a rural area with limited broadband internet access, many of my classmates were forced to spend hours at the library or at other's homes in order to complete the project. On the other end of the spectrum, my grandfather is without broadband internet access and, in order to complete Medicare plans, needed to come to my family's house and use our internet. Both of these cases caused great inconvenience that could have been eliminated with adequate broadband internet availability.

The benefits of broadband internet are clear, but there are many challenges to providing access, particularly in rural areas. Satellite internet is slow and has high installation costs. Cable internet is offered through local cable television providers when available but can be cost prohibitive. While fiber-optic internet is newer and faster, it is necessary to lay down fiber-optic cables, which means that access is limited. Furthermore, even when broadband internet is available in rural areas, it is often slower and more unreliable than in metropolitan areas. For instance, my family relies on DSL, or Digital Subscriber Line, which makes use of unused telephone wires. Quite frustratingly, the only option available to us is our provider's slowest service. The telephone wires in our area are not equipped for high speed internet. Our provider could update them, but due to low population density of our area, it simply wouldn't be profitable.

Despite these challenges, a number of steps have been made to improve broadband internet access throughout Minnesota. Both the state and federal governments plan to make multi-million dollar investments in the coming years, but how the money will be spent is yet to be decided. I believe state and federal government should work together to ensure that every area has broadband internet access. This process should include making it easier for local governments to obtain grants as well as protecting residents from the price hikes of providers with no competition. Once every citizen has broadband internet, the focus should be on improving the connection in 'underserved' areas so every citizen has reliable access.

Each year, broadband internet becomes more important, leaving rural residents without access behind the times. In this digital age, every citizen needs reliable and affordable broadband internet access. I believe this can be accomplished with the help of our government.