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Equal access to broadband internet is important. Having broadband internet access allowed me to attend an online public school, take online college courses as a Post-Secondary Education Option (PSEO) high school student, and complete college assignments that are most often due online. In order to participate in online school or attend college, students need access to lots of data at fast speeds. This would not work with a dial-up internet connection.

Broadband internet is vitally important in agriculture, too. I work at a horse stable. We use a private Facebook page to communicate scheduling changes and any horse related issues. My brother hopes to work for a company this summer that flies drones over fields to map and provide information to assist farmers in accurate fertilizer and other applications and along with accurate information on field moisture, to allow for more accurate irrigation. With appropriate technology, farmers can watch live videos of the animals in their barn. This is especially helpful during the birthing season or if there is a sick animal to watch. Farmers can also monitor other aspects of their farming operations including bin moisture, security, and in many dairy applications. Without high speed internet, farmers would not be able to use these services and access the data provided.

By having broadband internet access, students can do online homework at home. Home based businesses, and farms can access information instantly. And messages can be sent and received without having to make a phone call. Educational institutions continually use the internet more for research, homework, and communication. Rural and small town businesses need access to the internet for emails, correspondence, data sharing, and billing. Having access to fast, secure, and reliable internet is as important in rural areas as in metropolitan areas.

There are many challenges with providing broadband internet access in rural areas. Economic challenges are at the top of the list. The cost to install high speed internet is four times greater than in metropolitan areas, and so costs are a huge issue. It also takes resources to upgrade to faster speed and more reliable fiber optics. Fiber optic lines were placed at the back end of our property last fall. Sometime in the future we hope to access the fiber optics, which will greatly increase the speed of our internet service. There can also be geographical challenges such as rock formations, mountains or islands.

Government at all levels should support broadband internet access by providing businesses that can provide these services to rural areas with tax incentives, grants, and rebates to install needed equipment and system upgrades to build their networks. Foundations and nonprofit organizations can also provide financial and technical support to the internet providers. Discounted broadband internet fees could be provided to those with limited income to help reduce the broadband internet access gap. Funding from the federal and state government to support the installation of high speed internet is paramount to ensure all Americans have equal access to the internet.