

Holperin

Senate

the Northern Advantage

PO Box 1256 • Eagle River, WI 54521 • 715.891.1412 • holperin_00@yahoo.com

Paid for by Holperin - Senate, Sandy Kinney, Treas.

Universal High Speed Internet for Northwoods is Holperin Plan

Wednesday, June 4, 2008

(For more information: 715-891-1412)

High speed internet access is one of the top economic development issues for rural northern Wisconsin, State Senate candidate Jim Holperin said today as he announced his plan to assure high speed internet access to every home and business in the 12th Senate District by 2012.

“Infrastructure like roads and rail and electricity has always played a key role in supporting commerce and economic success,” Holperin said. “Today, high speed internet connectivity is the essential infrastructure necessary to attract and sustain business in a region.”

Holperin said lower population densities in the rural north result in many areas without high speed access. “Large parts of the north are being left behind and that hurts job creation, business growth and economic success,” he said.

If he is elected, Holperin said that within 60 days he would select and convene a task force on rural internet connectivity and ask the panel to develop a plan to assure universal high speed internet service to every home and business in the Senate district by 2012.

“Clearly, high speed internet access must be provided by the private sector,” he added. “No one thinks state government should build or own a broadband network.”

Yet, since there is not sufficient profit motive for private providers in rural areas, a government/private sector partnership is inevitable.

“There are several initiatives I believe are possible which do not involve spending additional tax dollars,” Holperin said. Among those are:

- Offer rural internet service providers access to low-interest financing through state-backed industrial revenue bonds.
- Amend Community Development Block Grant Program guidelines to allow participation by private sector high speed providers that agree to serve unconnected rural areas.
- Direct the Wisconsin Department of Commerce to maximize Wisconsin’s

exposure to federal grant and loan funding as well as loan guarantees available for rural broadband connectivity.

- Create a new high speed internet connection loan program using the state's bonding authority, and guaranteeing repayment through subscriber revenue.
- Urge continuation of the current Internet Equipment Tax Credit Program to provide additional incentives for companies that invest in rural broadband infrastructure.

"I'm hoping the task force can develop several other creative and effective incentives for private sector companies to extend service to every northwoods business and resident that wants high speed internet," Holperin said.

"The key is to make this issue a priority and to keep the pressure on state government," he concluded. "It's sometimes easy to talk about progress on a big issue like this, then lose interest after awhile. What's needed is to keep the focus on until the job is done."