



Romaine Quinn

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 75th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

February 14, 2018

Assembly Committee on Rural Development and Mining

Chairperson VanderMeer and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Telecommuter Forward! Communities bill, Assembly Bill 917.

Cities, towns, and villages across Wisconsin know that high-speed internet is crucial to attracting young families and keeping existing residents happy. They are continuing to invest in broadband infrastructure that ensures strong connections no matter where you are. Our expanded funding for Wisconsin's broadband grant program is helping them do this, and our Broadband Forward! Communities certification is raising awareness of the importance of internet access.

Now it's time to highlight Wisconsin's telecommuting infrastructure. AB 917, the Telecommuter Forward! Communities bill, creates a certification with the Public Service Commission to highlight communities that offer infrastructure and opportunities to work remotely. This will be a new tool in the arsenal of rural communities across the state to attract people from out of state or just out of town.

But another important component of a high-tech workforce is telecommuting. More and more, companies are offering the ability to work remotely – and workers of all ages are taking advantage of that flexibility to live closer to their families, closer to nature, or just closer to the sense of community that small towns here offer.

In order to be certified, a community must adopt a resolution declaring its commitment to promote the availability of telecommuting options, whether that's shared workspaces or high-speed internet access to the home. It must also designate a

point of contact who will coordinate with stakeholders, communicate development goals, and promote telecommuting workspaces and other available telecommuting options, among other duties.

Wisconsin is in the middle of a discussion right now about how to attract a next-generation workforce to our state. Part of the answer to that is economic incentives to attract high-tech businesses. Part of that is to remind people who have moved away how much they're missing.

We all have communities that can offer homes with great lake views and fantastic outdoor recreation. When we add the Telecommuter Forward! certification, we give communities the ability to market a high-tech option as well. For communities like Cable, Wisconsin, this represents a huge opportunity to draw new people in.

Not long ago, I authored a bill to allow the Town of Cable the ability to redevelop the historic Telemark Ski Lodge. In getting to know the folks who are working on that project, I learned that Cable has an amazing infrastructure to offer its residents the option of telecommuting. Scott Sandstrom, the executive director of the Bayfield County Economic Development Corporation, told me about the town's focus on offering this option as a way to attract new residents from the Twin Cities and other areas.

I was surprised – but I shouldn't have been. None of us should be. We should all be able to see and celebrate the communities across our state that are doing the work to offer high-tech options to their residents. And we should be shouting from the rooftops about the infrastructure we can offer. AB 917 is a great tool to be able to do just that. I hope you'll support this idea whose time has come.

Thank you. I'm happy to take any questions you may have.



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

February 14, 2018

Assembly Committee on Rural Development & Mining Testimony on Assembly Bill 917

Good morning!

Thank you Chair Vander Meer and committee members for hearing Assembly Bill 917 (AB 917), which creates a Telecommuter Forward! Community certification and the Telecommuter Forward! council at the Public Service Commission (PSC).

AB 917 builds on last session's 2015 Wisconsin Act 278, which created the Broadband Forward! Community certification. Currently 20 municipalities and counties have signed up to become Broadband Forward! communities, signaling their desire to efficiently implement broadband infrastructure projects. More communities are on their way to getting registered.

The Telecommuter Forward! Community Certification program is a completely different program. This certification will be a promotional tool for communities with outstanding broadband capability. These communities will be able to promote themselves as ideal places for telecommuters to locate or for companies looking for telecommuting workers to recruit. Communities such as the City of Reedsburg in Sauk County have excellent infrastructure and ready access to high-speed internet. Telecommuter Forward! Certification will be one more way for these communities to promote themselves to telecommuters and the companies who employ them.

Communities seeking certification would adopt a resolution in support of telecommuting and apply to the PSC. The interested community needs to designate a single point of contact which specific responsibilities including: 1) coordination and partnership with telecommuting stakeholders; 2) collaboration with broadband providers and employers to identify, develop, and market telecommuter-capable broadband packages; and 3) communication and partnership with broadband providers and economic development professionals to develop common goals.

The bill as introduced, creates a Telecommuter Forward! council that will advise the PSC. However, the committee that heard the companion bill in the senate, amended the proposal on a 5-0 vote and eliminated the creation of the council. A similar amendment to AB 917 has been drafted for your consideration.

Thank you again for hearing AB 917, and your timely action on the bill.

Quality of Life in the BAYFIELD COUNTY area

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- 24-Hr Emergency Access
- MMC Cancer Center
- Rehabilitation Services
- North Lakes Community Health Center
Ashland, Washburn & Iron River
- Elderly / Long-Term Care Facilities

Unique Venues & Events

- Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua
- American Birkebeiner XC Ski Race
- Bayfield Apple Festival
- Book Across the Bay
- Grand View Firehouse 50 Bicycle Road Race
- WhistleStop Marathon
- Chequamegon Bay Birding & Nature Festival

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Higher Education

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- University of Wisconsin - Superior
www.uwsuper.edu
- Northland College - Ashland
www.northland.edu
- Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College
www.lco.edu

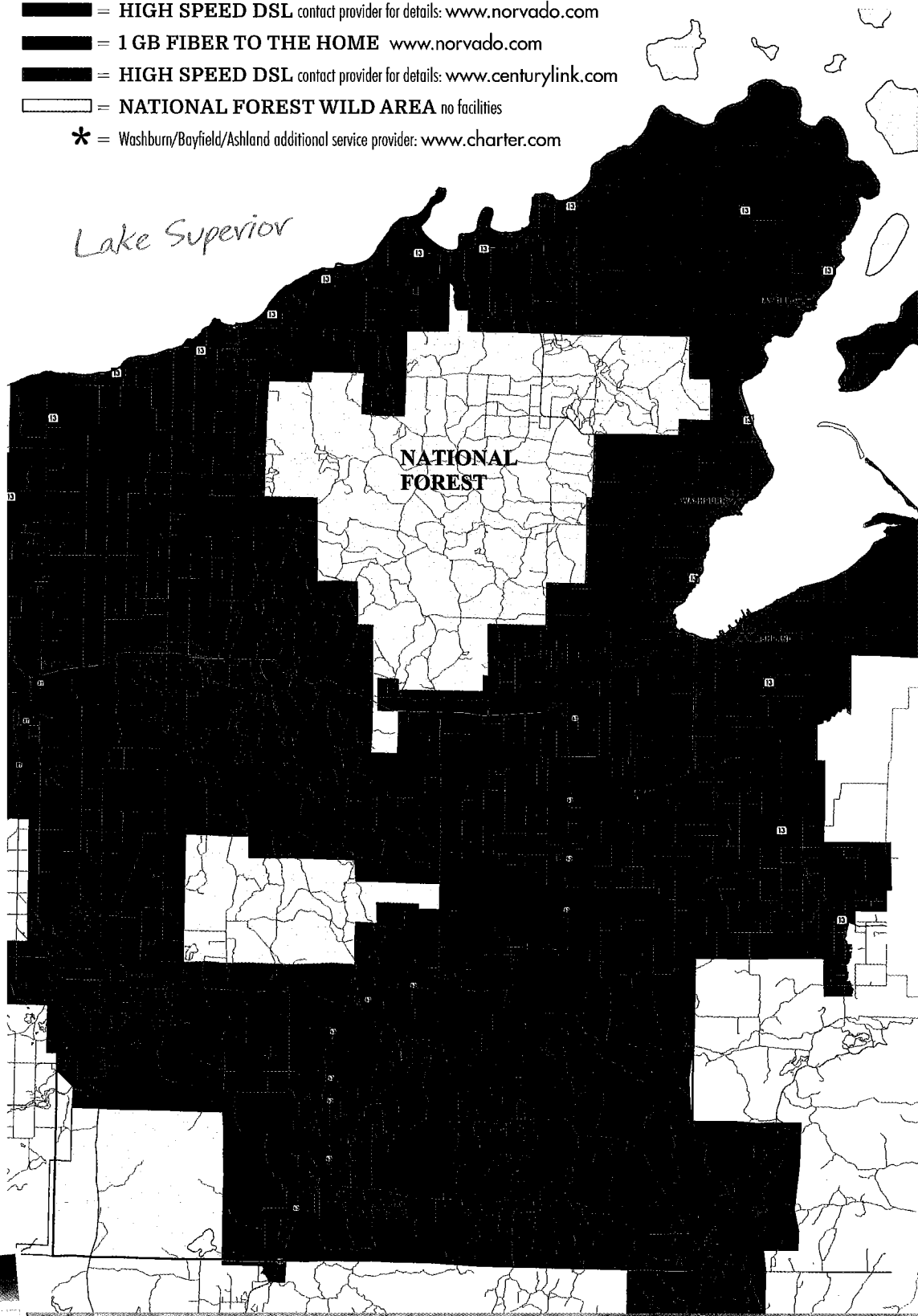
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BAYFIELD COUNTY Broadband AVAILABILITY MAP

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- = 1 GB FIBER TO THE HOME www.norvado.com
- = HIGH SPEED DSL contact provider for details: www.centurylink.com
- = NATIONAL FOREST WILD AREA no facilities
- * = Washburn/Bayfield/Ashland additional service provider: www.charter.com



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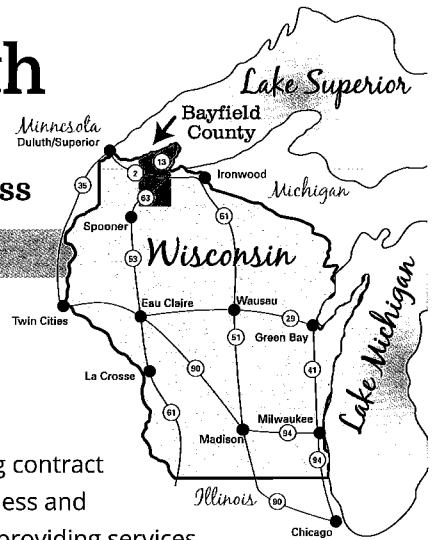
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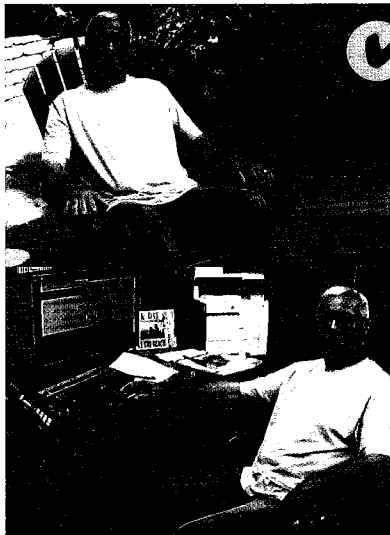
BAYFIELD COUNTY SUCCESS STORIES



Telecommuting

Frank Pearson - Rural Oulu, Wisconsin

I work from home for *Saturn Systems*, a software engineering contract firm based in Duluth. Saturn develops applications for business and government. Working full time, my telecommuting involves providing services for a company in Minneapolis. Technology is quite literally my business. It is absolutely essential to it. I could not live, and work, from our rural home without the access we have to high speed internet. It has always been a dream of my wife and I to live on a homestead. This is a really nice synthesis, to move between the fast-paced world of troubleshooting time sensitive technology issues, and in the evening tending the central hearth, fixing the chicken coop, cutting some wood or just relaxing in nature. High speed fiber optic infrastructure in Bayfield County has made our dream a reality.



Home-Based Business

Dick Bond - Rural Cable, Wisconsin

My home-based business is *Source One-360* - a provider of nationwide network services. We deal with retailers and restaurant associations across the country. It is real important to me to have a technology backbone, a 24/7, 365 connection that I can rely on. *Norvado* ran fiber right to my cabin in the Northwoods of Wisconsin. I couldn't get that when I was in Madison. I now have a gig up and a gig down of bandwidth. This gives me unlimited technology capabilities to do whatever I want to do as a client. In our business we allow our people to work from wherever they want, so they can be as comfortable as they can possibly be. This is why it became vital that we could have an infrastructure that could support that networking. I love that I am now able to get up in the morning, sit on my Northwoods deck, drink coffee and relax. I already had the business - It's just a matter of now doing it from where I want to be.



Brick & Mortar Business

Merlyn Coy - Downtown Iron River, Wisconsin

My business is *Dental Metrics Laboratory, Inc.*, a full-service digital dental laboratory, specializing in non-metallic restorations. Running a successful business in rural Wisconsin is very rewarding, and a boon to the local economy. There is a powerful sense of pride that comes from operating in a small community. We strive to provide high skilled, high tech and sustainable jobs with well-paid positions in a life-long career field. The work we do here is based on advanced digital production technology. 3D scanning, rendering and milling are everyday actions at the lab. Due to the excellent speed and bandwidth available, we know we will be able to grow our online supply-side as fast as we wish in the future.

"Love where you work."

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