



DEPARTMENT OF  
**COMMERCE**  
COMMUNITY AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Regulatory Commission of Alaska

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*Emil Notti, Commissioner*  
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## PRESS RELEASE .....

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### **CONGRESS PASSES LEGISLATION ALLOWING MORE COMMUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RURAL ALASKA BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS GRANT PROGRAM**

Under a continuing state and federal effort to increase the availability of affordable broadband Internet service in rural Alaska, federal funds have been allocated to assist service providers in bringing broadband Internet to underserved rural Alaska communities. The grant is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development and is being jointly administered by the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development and the Regulatory Commission of Alaska.

The grant program, established in 2002, was developed to provide federal funding for projects that would bring broadband Internet service to unserved rural Alaska communities. Appropriating language limited eligibility to rural communities that had neither local dial-up nor broadband Internet access. At the beginning of 2008, the vast majority of Alaska communities enjoyed some form of Internet access due to the success of federally-funded programs and the efforts of private and public enterprises to bring Internet service to rural Alaska. Federal grant programs have provided the necessary funding for broadband Internet service deployment in 36 communities since 2002.

In 2008, Congress passed Farm Bill legislation which expanded community eligibility under the grant program so that rural communities without broadband Internet service may be eligible for funding. Consequently, communities that have non-broadband local dial-up Internet service may be eligible for funding that will allow an upgrade of the service to broadband levels.

The expansion of the grant program was the result of concerted state and federal efforts to revise program guidelines, and will enable more Alaskan communities to enjoy the benefits of broadband Internet access. Only telecommunications carriers and cable operators are eligible for grant funding, and the carriers must collaborate with communities to bring broadband Internet service to an eligible community. Grant funding will be available help offset the costs of deploying facilities and training community residents, but grant recipients will be responsible for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the service. Interested communities are encouraged to contact an eligible company. The Regulatory Commission of Alaska anticipates issuing a request for grant proposals on September 15, 2008.

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