

Alaska State Legislature

Senator Shelley Hughes, Chair
Session: Capitol Room 30
Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 465-3743



Senator Robert Myers
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator David Wilson
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee

Senate Joint Resolution 13- Improve Broadband Internet Access Sponsor Statement

It is well known that in many parts of the state, internet access is scarce at best. In regions such as the unorganized borough, the internet can be extremely limited, slow, and prohibitive in terms of cost. In order for these regions to grow and increase their autonomy, an economic base is fundamental. Alaska certainly faces unique challenges to keep up with the rest of the developed world, considering that our communities are often separated by vast distances and geographical impediments. These facts, combined with winter weather, relatively low business demand in certain areas, and limited daylight hours half the year, are all challenges not only to the initial deployment of services, but to the ongoing operation and maintenance which can entail exorbitant costs.

As internet becomes more readily available in particular regions of the state, we see its benefits in education, healthcare, and commerce. Improved broadband in areas of Alaska where the capacity is now slow and limited could bring us similar benefits. Senate Joint Resolution 13 aims to address the issue of broadband access, speed, capacity, and affordability in the state by urging Congress to include the "information highway" in any forthcoming federal infrastructure legislation, just as roads, bridges, ports, and other projects essential for a functional and vibrant society are included.

Passage of SJR 13 would send a clear message that the legislature firmly supports broadband deployment in the state, recognizes the benefits of broadband, urges engagement with stakeholders throughout Alaska, and requests technology-neutral and flexible funding criteria in federal appropriation legislation to allow for Alaska's unique terrain and size.

Please contact my Committee Staff, Dawson Mann, at 465-1173 with any questions or concerns.