

## Governor Phil Murphy



# Governor Murphy, Congressman Gottheimer Highlight Nearly \$190 Million in American Rescue Plan Funding for Capital Projects Including Broadband Expansion in New Jersey

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**LAFAYETTE** – Governor Murphy and Congressman Gottheimer visited Sussex County today to highlight federal funding through the American Rescue Plan to expand broadband access for rural, low-income, and moderate-income areas of New Jersey. The funding for broadband expansion will be drawn from an overall pool of nearly \$190 million in funding for capital projects, which was secured with the advocacy and assistance of most of New Jersey's federal delegation. Additionally, legislation is under way to create a Broadband Access Study Commission to evaluate broadband access in New Jersey.

"Every New Jerseyan deserves access to reliable, affordable, and fast broadband internet," said **Governor Murphy**. "Unfortunately, too many residents and businesses, especially in rural and low-income areas of our state, are still unable to take advantage of broadband internet access. Along with our congressional delegation and our Legislature, we are working to ensure that those living and working in New Jersey have access to reliable high-speed broadband services."

"For the sake of our families, economy, schools, and health care, we must continue fighting for communities across Warren and Sussex Counties to help boost their broadband connectivity. That's why I fought to include dedicated investment for broadband infrastructure in the recent federal COVID-19 relief packages. Now, every county and town in Sussex and Warren County will be clawing back federal dollars that they can use to improve connectivity. We also need to get the dollars sent to the State of New Jersey for rural broadband to right here in Sussex and Warren," said **Congressman Josh Gottheimer**. "With partners on both sides of the aisle and at every level of government, I believe we can get this done."

"Ensuring the most hard to reach areas of New Jersey have access to high speed Internet is an absolute necessity, especially in light of the last year" said **NJBPU President Joseph L. Fiordaliso**. "It is crucial that we close the digital divide so our schoolchildren and businesses have the same educational and economic advantages regardless of where they are located. I am proud to join Governor Murphy and Congressman Gottheimer in elevating this critical issue."

"High-speed internet is an absolute necessity in our world today, yet there are too many homes and communities in New Jersey that lack the broadband service many of us take for granted. The last year with so many employees and students working from home through the pandemic, it underscored the need of being wired for reliable internet connectivity," said **Senator Steven Oroho**. "The creation of the Broadband Access Study Commission will examine the logistics of developing community broadband networks in order to deliver high-speed internet access, especially to underserved communities like many in rural areas. From a competitive standpoint, closing the digital divide is a must."

"Removing barriers and expanding high-speed community broadband internet access in underserved rural and urban areas will dramatically close the digital divide, while spurring enhanced educational and economic growth opportunities," said **Senator Troy Singleton**.

"One of the many lessons we have learned from this pandemic is just how important internet access is for many aspects of modern-day life," said **Assemblyman Nicholas Chiaravalloti**. "In order to avoid exposure to a deadly virus, many of our residents have been forced to rely on technology more than ever before to conduct their business. Yet far too many residents lack access to high-speed internet, which is why we need to look into ways we can ensure access for everyone."

"Working from home, attending online classes, speaking with doctors, shopping for essentials and staying in touch with loved ones are just some of the many ways the internet is used every day by our residents," said **Assemblyman Robert Karabinchak**. "Without access to reliable internet – none of that is possible. That's why we need to look into community broadband networks that could potentially provide affordable service to our least-connected communities."

"Guaranteeing internet access for all residents is a matter of equity," said **Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson**. "We cannot let any New Jersey family get left behind simply because they live in an area that private companies do not find lucrative or because they don't make enough to afford expensive internet charges. We must understand how the idea of a broadband network will serve the best interests of local communities in mind – a reality."

A lack of reliable broadband access has impacted communities in underserved areas of New Jersey and has had wide-ranging negative impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic, including creating a now closed digital divide for virtual learning, affecting the ability of businesses to transition to e-commerce, and causing difficulties for those needing to switch to remote work. Through the efforts of most of New Jersey's congressional delegation, the State has secured multiple funding streams that may be used for broadband access infrastructure improvements.

New Jersey is slated to receive nearly \$190 million from the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund, which is part of the American Rescue Plan signed by President Biden in March. These funds are in addition to the \$6.2 billion the State will receive in State Fiscal Recovery Funds from the American Rescue Plan. The Administration is awaiting guidance and closely reviewing methods to maximize investments to ensure that all communities have access to high-quality and modern infrastructure, including reliable broadband internet connectivity.

Legislation which will create a Broadband Access Study Commission (A850) is currently under consideration in the Legislature. The Governor previously sent A850 back to the Legislature with improvements to strengthen the bill, including greater representation of state agencies, in order to ensure the Commission has the expertise necessary to carry out its mission.

The Governor visited The Chocolate Goat Gift Shoppe in Lafayette to highlight the need for universal broadband access. Opened in 1998, The Chocolate Goat is owned by Jennifer Koza Todaro and Stephanie Koza Austin. Despite being a successful business, the Chocolate Goat has been held back from expanding because of a lack of reliable, broadband access.

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