

Verizon Announces Plans to Expand High-Speed Internet Availability for Rural West Virginians

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Network Expansion, Partnership With 'Connected Nation' to Help Provide Broadband to More West Virginians

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DANVILLE, W.Va., Aug. 15 /PRNewswire/ -- Access to high-speed Internet services for more rural West Virginians took a major step forward today with two announcements from Verizon that will help meet the challenges of delivering broadband services to rural communities across the Mountain State.

At a news conference this morning at the Danville Community Center, Verizon West Virginia President H. Stan Cavendish was joined by West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin III and Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., as well as a representative from the office of Rep. Nick Rahall, D-W.Va., Boone County officials and several West Virginia administration members.

Cavendish announced that under an agreement with Verizon, Connected Nation -- a nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting people to technology -- will map the state's broadband availability and help develop a comprehensive approach to expanding high-speed Internet services in unserved rural areas of the state.

Cavendish also announced that Verizon West Virginia has greatly expanded the number of sites it will equip for high-speed Internet service this year. These sites will serve more than 100 rural communities in Verizon's West Virginia service area.

In addition, the company is developing plans to further accelerate its broadband deployment in 2008.

"Our performance demonstrates that Verizon is genuinely committed to broadband deployment in West Virginia's rural communities," said Cavendish. "Widely available broadband Internet access is critical for education, health care, public safety, business competitiveness and community development."

The announcements complement the governor's goal of extending broadband availability to all West Virginians by 2010.

"If we want our citizens to be technologically equal to others in the world -- and our state to be economically competitive -- it is crucial that they have broadband access," said Manchin. "This partnership with Connected Nation and Verizon's increased broadband investment this year will help keep West Virginia on track to reach its goal."

Rockefeller, who earlier this year introduced a resolution in the U.S. Senate calling for a nationwide plan to extend next-generation broadband to all Americans, said, "As broadband expands, so do our possibilities. High-speed Internet is now essential for our health care system, our educational opportunities, and our economy, especially in rural areas. We need to provide everyone with the benefits that a powerful broadband network can bring, and mapping creates the foundation for making that a reality here in West Virginia."

Rahall, who represents the 3rd Congressional District of West Virginia and is a strong advocate for using technology to improve the state's economic base, said, "Getting broadband to our most rural communities isn't just a West Virginia issue. It's a challenge that we face throughout rural America. I couldn't be happier that this effort to bring broadband access to some of our nation's most rural communities will begin in Danville."

The Connected Nation team, with Verizon's support and working in cooperation with other broadband providers, will develop an accurate picture of current broadband deployment across West Virginia. Specifically, Connected Nation will produce detailed county-by-county maps of the state's broadband inventory and service gaps, using the state's geographic information system (GIS) mapping technology, which was developed for enhanced 911/public safety location databases. These maps will provide the foundation for finding broadband solutions in areas of the state that lack broadband technology.

Connected Nation, which has an excellent track record in expanding broadband in Kentucky and is now operating in a number of other states, works with community leaders and technology providers to identify and leverage resources from the public and private sectors for local technology planning, significantly improved broadband use and greater computer literacy.

"We look forward to working with Verizon to bring the benefits of broadband services to more rural West Virginians," said Brian Mefford, president and CEO of Connected Nation. "Through this partnership, Connected Nation will work to introduce broadband technology to previously unserved communities, boost economic development and improve the quality of life for rural West Virginians."

Verizon, West Virginia's leading provider of broadband services, has upgraded all of its 142 central switching offices in the state with high-speed DSL (digital subscriber line) technology. In addition, the company expects to have equipped 260 remote facilities with DSL technology by the end of 2007, predominantly in rural areas.

Verizon's accelerated deployment will hasten the availability of affordable high-speed Internet access in rural areas. For example, by the end of next year Verizon expects to have high-speed Internet service available to nearly 90 percent of homes and businesses in rural Boone County.

Cavendish said, "Our collaboration with Connected Nation is the right solution at this crucial time, but it's only a beginning. The governor's goal is ambitious, and Verizon is stepping up to the challenge. We encourage other technology companies to join in."

Verizon Communications Inc., headquartered in New York, is a leader in delivering broadband and other wireline and wireless communication innovations to mass market, business, government and wholesale customers. Verizon Wireless operates America's most reliable wireless network, serving more than 62 million customers nationwide. Verizon's Wireline operations include Verizon Business, which delivers innovative and seamless business solutions to customers around the world, and Verizon Telecom, which brings customers the benefits of converged communications, information and entertainment services over the nation's

most advanced fiber-optic network. A Dow 30 company, Verizon has a diverse workforce of more than 238,000 and last year generated consolidated operating revenues of more than \$88 billion. For more information, visit www.verizon.com.

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