

THE LINCOLN JOURNAL INC.

Charleston hosts broadband summit

-- 9/30/2009

CHARLESTON – Senator Jay Rockefeller this morning, September 28, 2009, kicked off the West Virginia Broadband Summit in Charleston by underscoring the importance of building a strong broadband infrastructure across the state – which he continues to fight for as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

“With broadband, we can transform education, improve health care, shore up business and employment opportunities, foster new dialogue and most importantly, improve our economy,” Rockefeller said. “I believe we can harness the power of the digital age to build the infrastructure that for generations to come will serve as our economic engine, strengthen our bonds, and offer a new range of opportunity to West Virginians.”

Background on Broadband Summit:

Today at the Summit, Senator Rockefeller also introduced keynote speakers Lawrence E. Strickling of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and Rey Ramsey of the One Economy Corporation. The day-long event is set to wrap up with a video presentation from Julius Genachowski, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Other speakers and panelists include Kelley Goes, Cabinet Secretary of the West Virginia Department of Commerce; and representatives of the Public Service Commission, State Office of Technology, West Virginia Division of Homeland Security, West Virginia University, Marshall University, telecommunications companies, communications workers, telemedicine and health information professionals, and the business community.

The Summit, which is being hosted by the Discover the Real West Virginia Foundation, is the second of its kind in West Virginia – with the first being held in Beckley in 2006.

Background on Broadband Funding:

Senator Rockefeller successfully included a \$4.7 billion nationwide broadband grant program in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to deploy broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas, expand public computer center capacity, and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service. This program is being administered by the NTIA.

The Recovery Act provided a total of \$7.2 billion for broadband expansion nationwide – with the remaining \$2.5 billion going to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to invest in broadband deployment.

Throughout his career, Senator Rockefeller has been a longstanding advocate of efforts to deploy broadband to underserved areas. In 1996, he championed the Universal Service

Fund (USF) as part of the 1996 Telecommunications Act to make sure that West Virginians and other rural Americans have access to affordable and reliable telephone and Internet services. Rockefeller's work to make sure that all classrooms in America have access to the Internet is most visible through the USF's E-Rate program, which provides significant resources for classrooms and libraries to provide Internet access to students and the public.

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