



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo Says Broadband Cuts Hurt Upstate Jobs

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO April 7, 2010

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(Albany) - State Sen. Joseph A. Griffo (R-IP-C, Rome) today reacted with alarm to Albany's plan to renege on a commitment for matching funds for sorely needed high-speed Internet access to North Country homes and businesses.

Senate and Assembly Democrats stripped \$100 million in funding from the state budget for broadband matching grants, including at least \$2 million that, together with federal stimulus

funding, was planned for projects in rural St. Lawrence County, according to a story in today's Journal News.

"Democrats called their plan a 'roadmap,' but cutting funds for programs that are tied to job growth and economic revitalization can only lead to a dead end for North Country jobs and businesses," Griffo said.

"Instead of the promised funds for sorely needed broadband improvements, local communities will be forced to dig deeper into their own budgets, or else continue to be left behind, without access to technology that's critical to our modern economy, and that so many people downstate take for granted."

"This is yet another example of Albany's downstate-dominated culture saying 'NO' to the needs of Upstate families and businesses," he said.

Griffo criticized state policies that he said favor downstate and inner-city communities for the bulk of broadband investments, and he pointed to maps produced by state experts that show that St. Lawrence County includes some of the largest swaths of underserved areas for broadband.

"In inner cities, the issue comes down to cost, and state officials have responded with funding to provide free and lower-cost Internet broadband to those communities. But in rural Upstate, many homes and businesses can't even find high-speed Internet access, regardless of price," he said. "That hurts us competitively, and is a disincentive for businesses to come here when we should be fighting for every single job that we can get."

Griffo urged Senate and Assembly leaders to rethink the broadband cuts, and find savings elsewhere in the state budget, such as by aggressively targeting fraud in entitlement programs like welfare and Medicaid and a revamping of these programs.

