



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jen Metzger

Senator Metzger Introduces Legislation to Close Broadband Gap and Hold Internet Providers Accountable for Service Quality

JEN METZGER March 10, 2020

| ISSUE: **RURAL BROADBAND SERVICE, SERVICE QUALITY, BROADBAND GAP**



Albany, NY...State Senator Jen Metzger (SD-42) has announced the introduction of two bills to address deficiencies in rural broadband service across New York State, one of which advanced out of the Senate committee on Energy and Telecommunications today. Metzger's broadband legislation would recognize access to high-speed internet as a right of all New Yorkers, essential to economic and social well-being and public safety.

Bill [S5696A](#), now out of committee, directs the Public Service Commission (PSC) to study the

availability, affordability, and reliability of high-speed internet and broadband access in New York State and produce a detailed access map on its website that indicates internet service by location. The legislation also requires the PSC to hold a minimum of four regional public hearings across the State and submit a report on its findings to the Governor and legislature within one year to prioritize broadband access for communities that have experienced negative economic and social impacts due to absent or insufficient service. The bill enjoys bipartisan support in the Senate, with 27 co-sponsors from both sides of the aisle.

“Lack of access to high-speed internet is a common complaint in my largely rural district,” **said Senator Jen Metzger.** “While significant progress was made under the Governor's Broadband for All initiative, there is still much work to be done in closing the urban-rural digital divide. We also have to recognize that being technically connected to the internet means little without sufficient speeds to support the streaming of content and other internet uses. This legislation requires that the PSC examine internet speeds, costs, and other factors that together affect broadband access so that we can fully close the digital divide in New York State.”

New studies from [Microsoft](#) and [BroadbandNow](#) indicate that broadband access data generated by ISPs is not always collected accurately, especially when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) gathers it using census blocks instead of individual households and businesses. Results show that a larger amount of rural communities are underserved with adequate broadband infrastructure.

Metzger's second bill ([S7988](#)) requires the Public Service Commission to establish service quality standards for internet companies, and will set a baseline for providing safe, reliable, and affordable internet service for all New Yorkers. The penalties provided for in this legislation, similar to those applicable to utility companies, will keep internet service

providers accountable for their actions and promises to customers.

“These companies are essentially monopolies in our communities with little accountability if they overcharge or underperform,” **said Senator Metzger.** “This legislation would require that the PSC establish service quality standards for restoration of service, new service connections, and promised internet speeds, with reporting requirements and penalties to ensure that companies make good on their commitments.”

Metzger held a **press conference** on the issue Monday in Sullivan County, one of the rural areas in Senate District 42 that suffer greatly from service gaps and irregularities.

“Broadband should be like turning the light switch on in our homes. It shouldn’t be something anyone in Sullivan County should have to struggle with,” **Sullivan County Manager Joshua Potosek stated.** “Advancing broadband availability is one of the Sullivan County Legislature’s top priorities, as it is crucial to our future. I appreciate Senator Metzger’s efforts to achieve the same at the State level.”

Jennifer Porter, a Narrowsburg resident who works full-time remotely and last week got high-speed internet service after waiting two years, said, “To deal with the lack of broadband, I rented a co working space for 26 months straight, and we enlisted one, then a second, satellite internet provider, which were more than \$150 a month for less than 1Mbps service, and we had two Verizon hotspots-- all in excess of \$500 a month trying to get service. I was the tired mom and employee driving around at 10 o’clock at night to park outside of a closed business, of which I had the WiFi password, just to send a PDF.”

Lynne Freda, two-time past President and former Board Chair of the Sullivan County Board of Realtors said, “The housing market drives much of the economy in Sullivan County. Lack of reliable internet service and high-speed connectivity has prohibited many second-home

buyers from investing in our area. It's one of the first questions they ask: 'Does this home have cell service and what is the internet speed?' Many could telecommute from Sullivan County if they had affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband. That would broaden our tax base, and retail establishments would benefit from it."

RELATED LEGISLATION

2019-S5696A

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to the public service commission reviewing broadband and fiber optic services within the state

May 13, 2019

In Senate Committee [Rules](#)

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2019-S7988

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
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- - Passed Assembly
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[Relates to quality standards for internet service providers](#)

March 06, 2020

In Senate Committee **Energy and Telecommunications**

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