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Assemblyman Wood Moves Broadband Bill

Sacramento - Assemblyman Jim Wood's Broadband Map Act, AB 1549, passed its first major hurdle in the Assembly Transportation Committee today. There to testify on behalf of the bill was California Center for Rural Policy Executive Director, **Connie Stewart**.

Assemblyman Wood said, "In 2016 there are still too many Californians that do not have access to high speed internet, or reliable telecommunications. As Chair of the Select Committee on the Digital Divide in Rural California it is my intention to do everything possible to ensure our rural communities have access to a dependable digital infrastructure."

AB 1549 would require Cal-Trans to keep a centralized database of where conduits available for fiber-optic cables are laid throughout the state. Currently, data regarding the location of fiber lines is scattered among dozens of companies and agencies. Developing a comprehensive map of which areas have broadband access, and which do not is next to impossible. The development of a central database would drastically reduce the cost and time it takes to further expand California's broadband network.

Ms. Stewart said, "This is an important step towards closing the digital divide in Rural California. Allowing providers to know where Caltrans has conduits will save millions of dollars in deploying fiber cables throughout California."

The absence of critical mapping data has created serious telecommunication outages throughout California. On December 9th 2015 Caltrans workers, not knowing a cable existed, severed an AT&T fiber-optic cable, wiping out services to tens of thousands of North Coast Residents for nearly 24 hours.

"This outage could have been prevented", said Wood. "AB1549 is a relatively simple solution that will lead to fewer outages, and make it less expensive to deliver high speed internet to communities that currently don't have that access", said Wood. "This database would be huge for our rural communities who are trying to compete in the 21st Century."

AB 1549 will next be heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

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Elected in 2014, Assemblymember Jim Wood (D- Healdsburg) represents the 2nd Assembly District, which includes all of Del Norte, Trinity, Humboldt and Mendocino counties, plus northern and coastal Sonoma County, including the northern half of Santa Rosa.

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