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Blunt Talks Rural Broadband with Missouri Electric Cooperatives

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Washington D.C. - This week, U.S. Senator Roy Blunt (Mo.), a member of the Senate Commerce Committee, spoke to Missouri Electric Cooperatives during their trip to Washington. Blunt released the following statement after the meeting:

“Access to broadband is an issue that impacts virtually every Missourian. It’s critical for students to do their homework, businesses to grow, hospitals to treat patients, and farmers to meet growing world food demand. In 2018, it’s unacceptable that more than 50 percent of rural Missourians currently lack access to broadband. I’m committed to working to end the digital divide and help every area of our state, particularly our rural communities, compete and succeed.”

The government spending bill, which was signed into law last month, provides \$600 million for a new rural broadband pilot grant and loan program. This program will target areas that do not have access to broadband, and includes provisions to prevent overbuilding.

As a member of the Commerce Committee, Blunt has pressed the need to expand rural broadband, noting that an increasing number of farmers are utilizing wireless infrastructure, GPS, data centers, autonomous systems, and fiber optics for precision agriculture and high-speed commodity trading.

Last year, Blunt urged the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to act on \$2

billion in funds available for rural broadband, and to open this money up to auction so new entrants in this field, like electrical cooperatives, could competitively bid. Following Blunt’s letter, the state subsequently considered a notice to deploy fiber optics in rural parts of

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