

December 17, 2009

Washington, DC - Thursday, members of the New Mexico Congressional Delegation announced today that the New Mexico State Library has been awarded \$1,457,488 in recovery funding to expand broadband technology and access across New Mexico. The "Fast Forward New Mexico" program, administered through a partnership with the University of New Mexico, Global Center for Cultural Entrepreneurship, and the 1st-Mile Institute, aims to increase statewide broadband adoption and promote computer literacy and Internet use in rural, Hispanic and Native American populations. The initiative will also reach out to small businesses and entrepreneurs.

"Internet access is no longer a luxury, it's an important part of our everyday lives. We must work to ensure that all parts of our state have Internet access so that students and businesses alike have the tools they need to succeed," Senator Jeff Bingaman said. "By making Internet access available to the public, our state's libraries are providing an extremely important service. This grant will help them reach out to even more New Mexicans."

"Bridging the digital divide for rural residents and diverse communities is key to spurring small business growth and expanding educational opportunities in our state," said Senator Tom Udall, a member of the Senate Commerce Committee. "I am pleased New Mexico is one of the first recipients of these broadband stimulus grants that will help bring 21st Century tools to our citizens."

"Rural and tribal communities are often left behind in the technology innovation race. By introducing these communities to broadband technology, not only can we increase educational opportunities, but we can also boost our small businesses and local economies," Congressman Harry Teague said. "Investments in broadband programs foster long-term opportunities for competition and economic growth."

"Extending broadband throughout New Mexico will help our businesses grow, our children learn, and our communities stay informed," said Congressman Ben Ray Luján. "I am encouraged by this important grant, and I look forward to exploring opportunities to improve and expand

broadband to ensure that our communities--from rural towns to larger cities--have reliable internet access."

"The world of information technology is vast, and vital to education and business development," said Congressman Martin Heinrich. "By connecting rural New Mexicans with improved access to the Internet, we open the door to endless possibilities for learning and inspiring entrepreneurship and economic growth."

The program will host small group trainings at public and Tribal libraries in 15 communities across the state. Additionally, programs will be developed for first-time computer users to address computer literacy and Internet usage. The New Mexico State Library will also provide training in computer and Internet use for small organizations and business owners. According to the Department of Commerce, Fast Forward New Mexico is estimated to result in 3,000 new household broadband subscribers, 1,000 new business and institutional broadband subscribers, and 3,200 new users at public computer centers.