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## Space: Big broadband grant to mean 725 new jobs

U.S. Rep. Zack Space announced during a conference call Wednesday morning a \$66 million grant that will bring broadband Internet access across Appalachian Ohio.

Space, a Democrat from Dover, said he has been working on the Connecting Appalachian Ohio Broadband Plan since he was elected to Ohio's 18th Congressional District in 2006. The district includes the northern portion of Athens County.

In his announcement, Space said the plan is expected to create 725 jobs during its construction, in addition to the economic opportunities created by the broadband network. The grant is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and the money will help lay a fiber-optic network that is expected to expand broadband in 34 counties throughout the region.

"Pure and simple, this is about jobs," Space said. "The truth is that many businesses today simply won't go to a place where they don't have access to both a good workforce and a broadband network. There's no doubt that we have the workforce, and this funding will provide the technology we need to attract new industry to Ohio."

Space said that bringing broadband access to the dramatically underserved Appalachian Ohio region will create economic opportunities for businesses in rural areas.

"For almost four years, I have been fighting with every fiber of my being to bring broadband to our region," Space said.

"Today, this vision which I've worked tirelessly to develop begins to become a reality, and we can all proclaim that a new day in rural Ohio has come. This is about putting us on an even playing field and allowing us to fairly compete with the rest of the world."

In a release, Space said that the 18th District lags behind the state average in both computer ownership and broadband adoption. Of the 705,000 households in the region served by Connecting Appalachian Ohio, 457,000 are underserved and an additional 125,000 are entirely unserved.

Space said that businesses without access to a broadband network are proven to possess significant economic disadvantages compared to those businesses with broadband.

Under the plan, he announced, 592 sites will be directly connected to a fiber network, including 25 community colleges, 15 university campuses and four career training centers; 34 county 911 public safety answering points; 212 health-care facilities; 231 K-12 school buildings and 34 industrial parks.

Last week, as part of a separate project focusing on the same problem, Nelsonville Cable, Inc., was the second area company to [receive stimulus money](#) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to increase broadband service. Nelsonville Cable was awarded \$4.6 million in funds. In March, Athens-based Intelliwave, Inc., [was awarded \\$2.3 million](#) in stimulus funds to expand its broadband network.