

OPINION

OUR OPINION

Not-So-Broadband

Kentucky leads nation in recovery act investment, just not here

In 2007 the Standard wrote a series of articles about how important getting broadband/high-speed internet access to the citizens of Todd County would be for future growth.

We talked to experts. We petitioned ideas from the public. Heck, we even came up with a 5, 10 and 25 year plan for the county based on the sum of the information we were able to ascertain.

Along with economic development and the health of Todd Countians, broadband was deemed not only necessary for the future, but vital if we were to get ahead of the pack and become an area that did more than provide better jobs and services through innovation.

Still, it seems, that despite the best efforts of the judge-executive, state representative and state senator, we are now behind the pack.

We are losing the race toward the future. After almost 15 years

of decline in nearly every conceivable category of progress, it now seems that we may also be behind when it comes to the race to be an innovator and having a tech-savvy population that could attract all sorts of job development, advancement in education and even better health care.

It was announced this week that Kentucky leads the nation (with \$305 million in loans and grants) when it comes to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Broadband Initiatives Program.

Residents in 71 of the state's 120 counties will get new or improved broadband service.

More than half the state, 2.8 million people, will be given a tremendous opportunity.

But not Todd County.

We have some of the more advanced technology in our schools with students having access to laptops, iPads and iPods. Yet many students go home to 1994 technology with

dial-up. Our main provider, AT&T, claims it is fixing the problem, but it seems that unless you are going to purchase a cell phone and use the internet or its wireless cards there will be no significant changes for most of us.

Some experts have complained that one large flaw in President Obama's rural broadband plan is that large companies like AT&T have not sought out the broadband funding since it wouldn't be enough of a profit center.

That seems fair if you are trying to make money off something like this, but broadband should be much like the money that was spent in 1937 to bring electricity to rural areas. That coupled with farm-to-market roads brought great advancements nearly 75 years ago to most of Kentucky.

Broadband shouldn't be a profit center. It should be a low-cost service that helps give us leverage in an international market. It has the potential, coupled with the

untapped green technology that will be moving into the area, to put us back ahead of the pack — which is now more than half the state!

Still, and this is an honest plea to our officials on both the county, state and federal levels, why don't we have a government that provides the service at a low cost and gives some honest competition to the telephone and cable providers?

Because, as it has been said many times before, if "the current internet providers had to compete for customers, rural places would have the fast, reliable internet that we need."

Say what you want, but no one we know wants to knowingly be behind most of the state in anything ever again.

Please, discuss this with every elected official you know, and let's take our being left off a very large money list as a call to action.