

## Maine Broadband Coalition

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### **New coalition advocates for “ultra-fast” Internet in Maine** *Multi-year effort begins with “flood of broadband bills” in Augusta*

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(Rockport, Maine) Maine may have experienced a crucial turning point last summer, when a commentator for Bloomberg Television in New York City compared the state to a “developing nation,” citing in particular the poor quality and speed of its Internet services.

The critique reverberated loudly around the region, and today a collection of Maine businesses, municipalities and non-profit organizations responded by announcing that they have formed the Maine Broadband Coalition (MBC). Their goal is to help state policy leaders map out a sensible solution to the problem.

The group has established a web site ([www.MaineBroadbandCoalition.org](http://www.MaineBroadbandCoalition.org)), and published its first YouTube video (<http://bit.ly/1xDFJUT>). Supporters of the coalition testified on several bills last week in front of the legislature’s Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. According to its web site, “An important goal of the MBC is to assemble cogent, fact-based information to help public policy makers and Maine citizens make the best choices about building a robust and productive information technology infrastructure — decisions we are all facing right now. We welcome one and all to this effort.”

Some legislators have marveled at the number of broadband bills --- well more than thirty --- that have been introduced during the current legislative session. But Alan Caron, President of Envision Maine ([www.envisionmaine.org](http://www.envisionmaine.org)), said he’s not surprised by the “flood of broadband bills” that the legislature and the governor’s staff are studying.

“More and more people are seeing that if we build ultra-fast Internet networks, all across the state, more people will come here,” Caron said. “More young people will stay and our entrepreneurs and businesses will compete with anyone in the world. If we don’t make those investments now, we’re going to continue to pay the price with a weak economy, falling further behind.”

Carla Dickstein is the senior VP for research and policy development at CEI ([www.ceimaine.org](http://www.ceimaine.org)) an organization founded in Wiscasset that bills itself as “a national

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leader in rural business development.” Dickstein said MBC has been organizing for several months, but is not limiting its lifespan to the current legislative session.

“This group has come together very quickly, and in the end I expect it to be very broad, diverse, and to endure for several years. Building a world-class infrastructure for Maine is truly comparable to what rural electrification was in the 1920s and 1930s; it’s a monumental undertaking,” Dickstein said.

Dickstein said MBC is recruiting supporters from municipalities, business and industry, research labs, social justice organizations, educational institutions, libraries, healthcare and agriculture.

The “founding supporters” of the Maine Broadband Coalition include AARP Maine, The Aroostook Partnership for Progress, Axiom Technologies, Blue Marble Geographics, CEI, Cornerstone Communications, Dream Local Digital, Envision Maine, Full Circle America, Grow Smart Maine, GWI, Health Info Net, The Island Institute, Maine Center for Entrepreneurial Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Fiber Company, Maine Mayors’ Coalition, Maine Media Workshops + College, Mobilize Maine, NBT Solutions, Networkmaine, Northern Maine Development Commission, Pioneer Broadband, Piscataquis County Economic Development Council, Sanford Regional Economic Growth Council, Small Business Advocate (ME Secretary of State), Town of Isleboro, Town of Orono, Town of Rockport, City of South Portland, and the Washington County Fiber Initiative.

Maine Broadband Coalition (MBC) is an informal federation of public policy professionals, educational institutions, businesses, non-profit organizations and individuals who care deeply about Maine’s economic future. For more information visit [www.MaineBroadbandCoalition.org](http://www.MaineBroadbandCoalition.org).

LINKS:

[“State says 80 percent of Mainers ‘unserved’ by broadband,” Whit Richardson, Portland Press Herald: <http://bit.ly/1sLsr6a>](http://www.pressherald.com/story/news/politics/economy/2014/07/23/state-says-80-percent-of-mainers-unserved-by-broadband/74111700-2/)

[“Maine’s Big Problem: Why Is Internet Service So Bad?” Bloomberg Television: <http://bloom.bg/1qb8Rx7>](http://www.bloomberg.com/television/2014/07/23/maine-s-big-problem-why-is-internet-service-so-bad/)

[“Maine’s Slow Internet Service Rivaling Developing Nations,” Bloomberg Television: <http://bloom.bg/Wc0161>](http://www.bloomberg.com/television/2014/07/23/maine-s-slow-internet-service-rivaling-developing-nations/)

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