



2018 Session Report

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The Legislature adjourned for the year just before midnight on Sunday, May 20th, following a chaotic final week of the 2018 Legislative Session. Republican legislative leaders and Governor Mark Dayton failed to reach a comprehensive agreement on major pieces of legislation, and Governor Dayton subsequently vetoed the Omnibus Supplemental Budget bill on May 23rd.

The 990-page Omnibus Supplemental Budget Bill, [SF 3656](#), was put together by legislators in the House and Senate. It contained spending for all areas of government and hundreds of pages of policy changes. Unfortunately, the \$15 million in funding for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program was amongst the vetoed provisions. No funding will be available for this program until legislators pass a new biennial budget at the end of the 2019 session. Although this is an incredibly disappointing end to the 2018 session, we can be sure that our work was not in vain.

Advocates of Border-to-Border Broadband funding have a lot to be proud of this session. The final Omnibus Supplemental Budget Bill included \$15 million for Broadband grants with no carve-outs for satellite providers or other policy items. This provision, while a fraction of the actual need, enjoyed broad bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, and from the Governor.

The work we did this year to make bipartisan inroads will ensure long-term success for broadband funding. In past years, we saw competing partisan proposals for broadband funding. This year we had one bill in the House and one bill in the Senate with Republican and DFL co-authors. In an increasingly partisan political atmosphere, this accomplishment cannot be emphasized enough.

We were also able to grow the Rural Broadband Coalition membership to nearly 80 organizations, including new agriculture, business, healthcare, and education organizations. This groundwork will pay dividends when we come back next session to ask for base funding of \$71.48 million for the grant program in the 2019 biennial budget.

We had a successful Broadband Day on the Hill event in April that brought more than 60 broadband advocates to the Capitol. Legislators addressed attendees, took questions, and laid out their vision for why broadband funding continues to be a priority for Minnesota communities and businesses. Advocates from all corners of the state then met with dozens of lawmakers during the day and were able to watch the House Jobs Committee debate the House broadband funding bill.

As a closing, thanks to the members of the Rural Broadband Coalition for their strong effort, support, and consistency of messaging. To Nancy Hoffman, Chisago County EDA-HRA who served as Chair of the Coalition and the many organizations who contributed financially.

Thanks to Sen. Mark Koran (R-North Branch), Sen. Erik Simonson (DFL-Duluth), Sen. Jeremy Miller (R-Winona) and Sen. Julie Rosen (R-Vernon Center), Rep. Sandy Layman (R-Cohasset), Rep. Rob Ecklund (DFL-International Falls), Rep. Ann Neu (R-North Branch), and Rep. Dave Baker (R-Willmar) and many other legislators for their strong advocacy this year. Finally, thanks to Governor Mark Dayton, the folks at DEED, Broadband Task Force Chair Margaret Anderson Kelliher, and Danna McKenzie at the Office of Broadband for their consistent support and encouragement.