

Durbin, Duckworth Announce \$36 Million In Federal Funding To Bring High-Speed Internet Access To Communities Across Rural Illinois

by Theresa Bordenave & Gwen Pepin
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SPRINGFIELD – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today announced \$36,103,607 in federal funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to bring high-speed internet access to people

living and working across 13 counties in Illinois. Today's investments include funding from the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA), which provided a historic \$65 billion to expand reliable, affordable, high-speed internet to all communities across the United States.

"The pandemic emphasized that Illinoisans need access to high-speed internet to run their businesses and farms, go to school, access health care, connect with family and friends, and more," said Durbin. "Today's grant announcement for Hamilton County Telephone Co-Op and Shelby Electric Cooperative will help make high-speed internet access a reality for folks across rural Illinois. I'll continue to work with Sen. Duckworth to bring this federal funding home to Illinois."

"Showing up for rural communities means making sure every single Illinoisan has access to reliable electricity and broadband—no matter their zip code," Duckworth said. "As we've seen throughout the pandemic, we know that internet access is crucial for public health, the success of small businesses, educating our children, improving quality of life and so much more. I'm proud to join Senator Durbin in announcing this significant investment to bring broadband to more communities in our state, and I will continue to advocate for improved infrastructure for working families all across Illinois and our nation."

Today's announcement included federal funding for two Illinois Cooperatives:

1. Hamilton County Telephone Co-Op: \$12,413,362

This Rural Development investment will be used to deploy a fiber-to-the-premises network to connect 3,202 people, 248 farms, and 52 businesses to high-speed internet in Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Saline, Wayne, and White counties. Hamilton County Telephone Co-Op will make high-speed internet affordable by participating in the FCC's Affordable Connectivity and Lifeline programs.

2. Shelby Electric Cooperative Inc.: \$23,690,245

This Rural Development investment will be used to deploy a fiber-to-the-premises network to connect 4,057 people, 511 farms, 61 businesses, and two educational facilities to high-speed internet in Christian, Cumberland, Effingham, Fayette, Montgomery, Moultrie, and Shelby counties. Shelby Electric Cooperative will make high-speed internet affordable by participating in the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program.