



TELECOMS TO HIRE IF STIMULUS BILL IS APPROVED

Telecommunications companies will put thousands of construction workers to work this year expanding the nation's broadband infrastructure, if they get the money from the federal economic stimulus package. Congress is considering stimulus legislation that would pump billions of dollars into extending high-speed Internet service to areas that lack broadband today. The jobs would be created quickly and are expected to be short term. Millions of Americans, most in rural areas, could receive broadband services currently unavailable to them. The House of Representatives passed the stimulus bill January 29th, with \$6 billion for telecommunications infrastructure. The current Senate version of the bill being calls for \$9 billion toward broadband. Denver-based Qwest estimates it would cost \$3 billion to get broadband of about 7 megabits per second to areas that don't get broadband now. Technology experts worry that the United States is falling behind other industrialized nations in broadband deployment, which risks limiting the economy as high-speed Internet applications become more integral to businesses, and to key services such as hospitals and schools.

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