



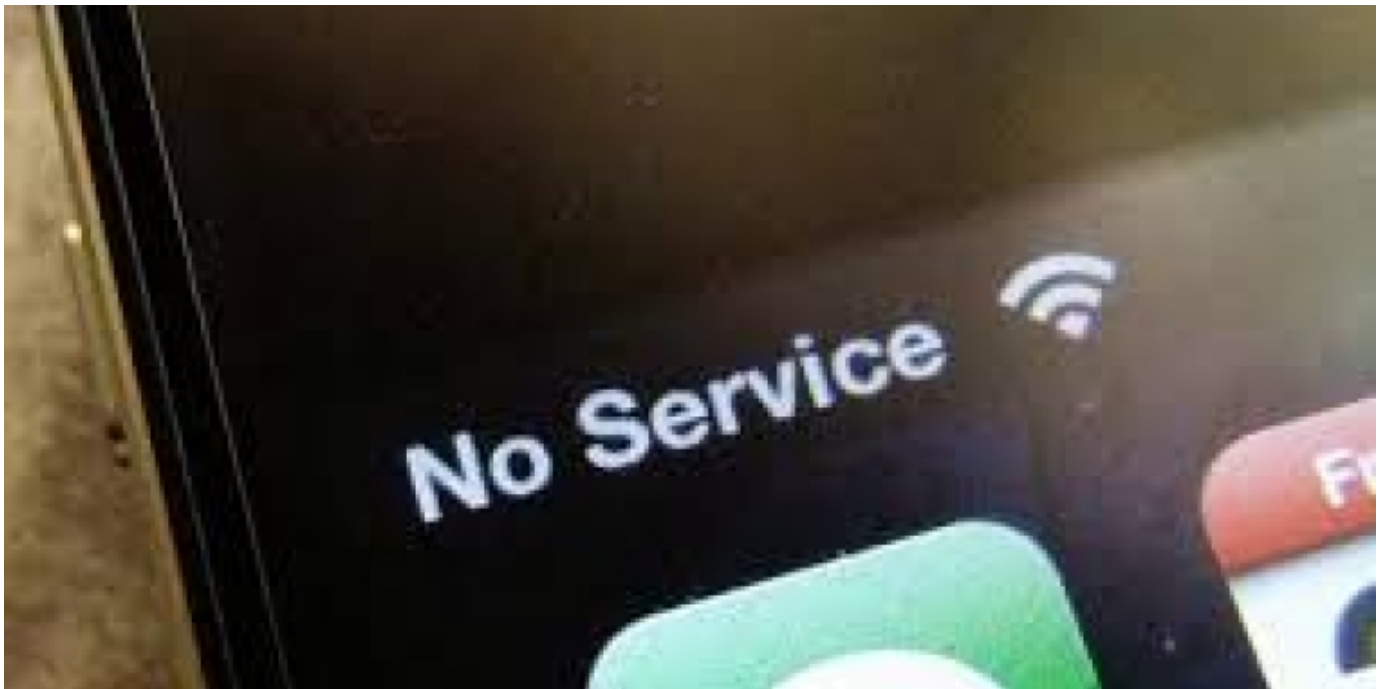
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel G. Stec

Upstate Cellular Task Force update requested

DANIEL G. STEC September 8, 2021

| ISSUE: **CELL SERVICE, CELL COVERAGE**



Senator Dan Stec and Assembly members Billy Jones, Matt Simpson, Robert Smullen and Carrie Woerner are seeking an update on the status of the New York Upstate Cellular Task Force, which was created almost two years ago but has not formally reported its findings or recommendations.

“With a new governor, we’re hoping for a renewed urgency on this issue,” said Senator Dan Stec. “We know as lieutenant governor, Kathy Hochul spent a lot of time in the car traveling the state and is likely well aware of the spotty and even non-existent cellular service in mainly rural communities. For the sake of public safety, but also economic development, these cell gaps need to be closed.”

“A 21st century economy requires a 21st century infrastructure,” said Assemblymember Carrie Woerner. “Two years ago this month, the state convened a group of experts to identify how to build out the necessary modern communications infrastructure throughout upstate New York. We are calling on Governor Hochul to release the report of this task force so that their recommendations can be acted upon.”

“The subject of connectivity for the residents of New York state is one that has long since become one of necessity for modern society. Never has this been more abundantly clear than during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Assemblyman Matt Simpson. “The state of normalcy for all New Yorkers has been forever altered and the lack of connectivity in the North Country has prevented scores of residents from making the adjustments necessary to adapt. The lack of expediency by the State to aggressively resolve this issue to date is a reflection of poor public health policy, poor education policy, and poor economic policy. With the new Governor, we now have an opportunity to turn the page and make this endeavor a model of policy success that New Yorkers can be proud of.”

“Cellular service continues to be an issue in the North Country,” said Assemblyman Billy Jones. “There are places in my district without any cellular coverage whatsoever and their landlines continuously have outages that leave these constituents with no phone service at all. What are they supposed to do in case of emergencies? This is a safety issue and it is crucial that New Yorkers are updated about the findings of the Upstate Cellular Coverage Task Force so that we can start working towards solutions to expand cellular service in our region.”

“Our people who live in the Adirondacks, and those who visit, need 21st Century emergency communications,” said Assemblymember Robert J. Smullen. “A new Governor is an excellent opportunity to move forward.”

The lawmakers sent a letter to Governor Hochul late last week, noting that they had made the same request for an update of former Governor Andrew Cuomo in late March and mid-July this year but never received a response.

The Upstate Cellular Coverage Task Force was announced and first met on September 10, 2019, with the stated goal of “developing solutions to address significant gaps in cellular service in rural regions.” The task force met several times that fall and reviewed mapping to determine precisely where cellular service gaps exist.

In the letter to Hochul, the lawmakers wrote: “As your administration takes shape and you begin focusing on various issues, we request that improving rural cellular and access to high-speed broadband be priorities,” adding that “any reports, findings and recommendations of the cellular task force be shared with us and the public.”