

# News from Senator George M. Borrello

## 57th Senate District

*Representing Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and portions of Livingston County*

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### **SENATOR BORRELLO LAUDS PASSAGE OF BILL TO ELIMINATE BARRIERS TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

*Senate Bill 7028 would prevent utilities from requiring broadband providers to bear utility pole replacement costs*

ALBANY – Senator George Borrello heralded the passage of [Senate Bill 7028](#), which he co-sponsors, as a critical step forward in expanding access to broadband service in rural areas.

The measure will ease cost and operational obstacles faced by broadband service providers seeking to build out infrastructure in rural and underserved areas of the state.

“The prevalence of ‘internet deserts’ remains one of the biggest problems in our rural areas and it was an issue that was exacerbated by the pandemic, which made remote work and schooling essential,” said Senator Borrello. “One of my top priorities in the Senate has been advocacy and educating my Albany colleagues on the challenging economics of rural broadband development and advancing solutions to improve it. We’ve made a big step in that direction with passage of this bill.”

One key provision of the bill would allow broadband providers seeking to install internet service via utility poles in a given area to obtain one contract for all the poles in that city, town or village, rather than being forced to get a contract for each individual pole, as is currently the case. Streamlining this process for providers will encourage more broadband development while also ensuring equitable service and access to the homes within a given municipality.

Another barrier to entry for providers has been the high cost of access to the poles owned by utilities. New high-speed fiberoptic cables are often installed on telephone poles that bring electricity and telephone landline access to homes. It is common practice for utility pole owners to delay the replacement of aging utility poles and then unfairly require broadband providers to fund the pole replacement costs as a condition of gaining access to the poles. This makes many new buildout projects financially unfeasible. This legislation prohibits this practice and would establish that providers requesting space on a pole will only be liable for a small portion of any replacement costs.

“The bipartisan support for this measure is encouraging and underscores the sharper focus driving this issue forward in the wake of the pandemic. While other challenges still remain,

including the state's onerous right-of-way broadband tax, the advance of this legislation proves that public awareness of this problem has grown, which makes further progress more likely," said Senator Borrello. "I would like to thank sponsors Senator Michelle Hinchey and Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner for their shared commitment to this vital issue which, at its core, is about ensuring all New Yorkers have the tools they need to learn, work, engage and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

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