



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 5.7.20
CONTACT: Sen. Mizell
PHONE: 985.839.3936

**EFFORT TO BRING BROADBAND INTERNET TO RURAL AREAS MOVES FORWARD IN
LOUISIANA SENATE**

Senate Bill 406, sponsored by District 12 State Senate President Pro-Tempore Beth Mizell, was approved by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and International Affairs, moving it to the full Senate for a vote. SB 406 is an effort to bring broadband Internet access to more of the state's rural areas.

"This bill is the result of an ongoing endeavor by stakeholders, locals, and the legislature to come up with solutions to bring Internet accessibility to rural residents," said Sen. Mizell. "The events of recent weeks have shown us that now, more than ever, it is critically important that all residents across Louisiana have access to the Internet."

If approved by the full legislature, the bill will make it easier for broadband providers to install their services by allowing them to collaborate with municipalities, electric cooperatives, and utility companies to construct, maintain, and operate broadband systems. Broadband services are those that provide high-speed, high-capacity access to the Internet.

Sen. Mizell says that the reliance on distance-learning as a result of COVID-19-related shutdowns only highlights a problem that has been there for decades. She added, "A century ago, rural children had no textbooks. As schools move to online-learning, students without broadband are in the same situation. This bill will encourage expansion of broadband across the rural parts of our state."

Senate Concurrent Resolution 35 was approved by the Senate Committee on Transportation, Highways, and Public Works. SCR 35, also authored by Sen. Mizell, requests the Department of Transportation and Development to determine which of its assets are available for broadband Internet lines and to implement a "Dig Once" policy allowing broadband operators to install cable in the ground at already existing work-sites.

SB 406 and SCR 35 now move to the full Senate for approval. To learn more about these bills and Sen. Mizell's other measures, please visit www.legis.la.gov.

###