

Palzewicz campaign: Broadband should be a public utility

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Brookfield, WI - During the Covid-19 pandemic, more and more people have been forced to work at home, go to school at home and engage the world online. That has brought on hardship for millions of people because they do not have access to broadband. Tom Palzewicz, running for Wisconsin's Fifth Congressional District seat, believes it is time for broadband to become a public utility, like electric and gas.

The Fifth District is both urban and rural, and not all have access to broadband. If there is no cable service, they rely on cell plans, which can become very expensive. If they do not have cell service, they are left without.

"The large inequalities between what people have and what they don't have from an access and a cost standpoint is huge," said Palzewicz. "And it's true in the Fifth Congressional District also. It's not just something that's either rural America or inner city America, it is pervasive even in our Fifth Congressional District. I personally think that broadband has to become a utility and to leave it in the hands of a for-profit industry, isn't in our best interest. And that's okay, I mean, things move from being for-profit into utilities. They've done it throughout our country's history. So it should be thought of as a utility at this point."

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought on the necessity of online education. Children who have access to broadband and the essential hardware to go online have been able to adapt easily to this new environment, but children without those tools are left behind. The move to broadband as a public utility will take investment and the political will by law makers to see it happen.

"It starts with an investment, but there's nothing in it for companies to invest in

rural America when it comes to broadband.” said Palzewicz. “There just aren’t enough people to make the investment pay off. It’s part of the same argument that the Republicans are using against the postal service. There are people who believe FedEx and UPS can do everything that the United States postal service does. That is just not true. There’s a whole bunch of people who rely on the postal service and it’s that last mile that makes it very hard to be profitable. But the way the postal service is set up, one, it’s a nonprofit. But the other is they figured out a way to make sure those costs make sense across the entire country.”

With personal interests over public interest the major sticking point, Palzewicz believes the government has the responsibility to step in and lead.

“I don’t know how you sugar coat it, but the bottom line is maybe just the government buying up the existing infrastructure. We did it with electricity. All our current utilities started off as for-profit companies, it’s not as if they started as a utility. And I think in some cities it did start as a utility, but other cities it started as a for-profit enterprise and it eventually became a utility.”

There is a lot of money at stake in providing broadband service. Moving from private to public will require some creative thinking.

“It’s a tough one because there are for-profit companies who have shareholders. And the shareholders expect a rate of return,” Palzewicz continued. “But this is also a necessary change and vital to millions of people. It will require the cooperation between business and government. I understand the position of business, so sitting down at the table and negotiating is vital for success. Our nation needs this, so it has to be done.”

Palzewicz is confident that all will benefit by putting the needs of America first by investing in our future.

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