

# Hyde-Smith says more cooperation needed to expand rural internet access

Senate Ag Committee reviews implementation of 2018 Farm Bill Rural Development Programs

**Press Release**

Following a hearing to examine implementation of rural development programs in the 2018 farm bill, U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) said on Thursday, November 7, federal agencies need more cooperation as taxpayer dollars are spent to expand broadband access to rural areas.

Hyde-Smith, who serves on committees that authorize and fund U.S. Department of Agriculture rural development programs, made the assessment after receiving testimony from Keith Hayward, general manager and CEO of the North East Mississippi Electric Power Association.

“The 2018 farm bill and subsequent agriculture appropriations bills include significant resources to connect rural America to 21st century technologies, first of among them broadband,” Hyde-Smith said.

“Ensuring homes, farms, and businesses in rural Mississippi and elsewhere have internet access won’t be easy. Today’s testimony indicates that effective investment of taxpayer dollars on this challenge will require federal agencies to collaborate more effectively. There’s no need to make this harder than it has to be,” she said.

Hyde-Smith commended Hayward for his leadership and bid to qualify for a USDA Broadband ReCon-

nect grant, a program intended to help build modern broadband infrastructure in rural areas lacking sufficient internet service. Hayward told the committee of the difficulties and uncertainties his association encountered in complying with application requirements.

Responding to Hyde-Smith, Hayward also discussed competing requirements rules set by agencies with jurisdiction over rural electric cooperatives and rural telecommunications systems engaged in expanding broadband service.

“If we’re going to serve rural, unserved sparsely-populated areas, our structure is different than telecoms. That has been demonstrated through some other utilities that are out there doing that, and we feel there needs to be a little bit more collaboration between the departments within the USDA,” Hayward said.

Testimony from the administrators of the Rural Utilities Service, Rural Business Service, and Rural Housing Service indicated ongoing efforts to issue updated rules regarding rural broadband programs and to coordinate with Federal Communications Commission and National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

In addition to supporting appropriations to support rural broadband initiatives, Hyde-Smith last week co-

**THE WICKER REPORT**  
By: United States Senator Roger Wicker



# Wicker salutes military on 100th anniversary of Veterans Day

*Promoting Peace, Prosperity, and the American Way of Life*

On November 11, 1919, President Woodrow Wilson declared Armistice Day – now Veterans Day – to mark the anniversary of the Allied victory in World War I. For precisely a century now, Americans have commemorated this occasion with ceremonies and parades. It also gives former service members the chance to share their experiences with younger generations.

President Wilson thought the armistice would last and that World War I had been the “war to end all wars.” But just a few decades later,

sponsored the Revitalizing Underdeveloped Rural Areas and Lands (RURAL) Act (S.1032) to ensure tax-exempt cooperatives retain their tax-exempt status if they use government grants and assistance, including rural broadband grants and FEMA disaster relief.

**CORRECTION:**  
It was reported in last week’s edition of the *Herald*, in the page 5 photo, “Lexington Colts to compete in National Peewee tourney” it was incorrectly reported that the team would be traveling to Orlando, Florida. The team will be traveling to Pensacola, Florida instead.

World War II would become the most devastating conflict in history. President Eisenhower changed the name to Veterans Day in 1954 in part to honor those who fought Japan and Germany.

Veterans Day celebrates all who have served in America’s armed forces, not just a single armistice or war. As a veteran, the son of a World War II veteran, and the father of an Air Force officer, I was glad to join Mississippians recently to discuss the significance of Veterans Day.

**A Debt of Gratitude**

# Pickens student inducted to honor society

**Press Release**

Cassidy Gatson of Pickens was recently initiated into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation’s oldest and most selective all-discipline collegiate honor society. Gatson was initiated at The University of Mississippi.

Gatson is among approximately 30,000 students, faculty, professional staff and alumni to be initiated into Phi Kappa Phi each year. Membership is by invitation only and requires nomination and approval by a chapter. Only the top 10 percent of seniors and 7.5 percent of juniors are eligible for membership. Graduate students in the top 10 percent of the number of candidates for graduate degrees may also qualify, as do faculty, professional staff and alumni who have achieved scholarly distinction.

Phi Kappa Phi was founded in 1897 under the leadership of undergraduate student Marcus L. Urann who had a desire to create a different kind of honor society: one that recognized excellence in all academic disciplines. Today, the Society has chapters on more than 300 campuses in the United States and the Philippines. Its mission is “To recognize and promote academic excellence in all fields of higher education and to engage the community of scholars in service to others.”

Earlier this month, many Mississippians cast their ballots in our state’s elections. That right is enshrined in our constitution and protected by our military. No matter the tides of politics, gratitude for this security unites Americans.

Military men and women do not stop helping their communities when they put away their uniforms. Veterans are business owners, nurses, police officers, preachers, school teachers, and shipbuilders. In the camouflage of civilian life across our country, they continue to act as leaders and role models.

Americans’ appreciation for our veterans is displayed every day. I am always glad to hear the phrase “thank you for your service” said to our veterans and to see honor flights come to visit war memorials in Washington. These small tokens of thanks go a long way.

During the past three years, Congress has passed 57 pieces of veterans legislation and sent them to President Trump for his signature. The new VA MISSION Act increases veterans’ health-care choices and streamlines community care programs. I am actively working to pass the HAVEN Act, which would protect veterans’ benefits. Other initiatives come from the state and local levels, including

programs at our universities as well as nonprofits like Combat Wounded Veterans of South Mississippi.

**Providing for Tomorrow’s Veterans**

Veterans Day is also a reminder of the need to support those currently in uniform. In President Wilson’s day, many Americans hoped disarmament would give us lasting peace. A century later, we have learned that peace comes through strength.

One of the most important roles of an elected official is to provide for the common defense. America has met past challenges because, for 58 years, Democrats and Republicans have passed the National Defense Authorization Act and agreed on funding for our troops. I am working to meet those goals as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Our military is confronting new threats, including from countries like Russia, China, and Iran, making this task more pressing every day. As Congress debates funding, I hope we can again fulfill our most basic constitutional responsibilities to tomorrow’s veterans. The lessons learned since the first Armistice Day show that the best way to protect the hard-fought gains of the veterans we honor is to support today’s Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen.

# SBE requests study of impact of eliminating the U.S. History end-of-course exam

**Press Release**

The Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) announced on Thursday, November 7, that further study is needed before a decision can be made regarding the potential elimination of the U.S. History end-of-course exam.

The SBE directed the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to work with the Accountability Task Force to research the impact that eliminating the U.S. History assessment would have on the statewide accountability system without changing the cut scores.

The Accountability Task Force is scheduled to meet on December 5.

The SBE’s decision followed a public comment period that opened on September 19 after the Mississippi Student Testing Task Force recommended eliminating the exam on the heels of an opinion poll of secondary education teachers. The opinion poll favored eliminating the exam. The U.S. History end-of-course exam

is the only state test not required by federal or state law.

During the public comment period, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) received 108 written comments: 27 comments favored keeping the exam, 42 favored eliminating the exam, and 39 comments were off-topic or unclear about their position on eliminating the U.S. History assessment.

Mississippi’s A-F accountability system evaluates how well schools and districts are performing each year. Grades are based, in part, on how well students perform and progress from year to year on the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) tests for English language arts (ELA) and Mathematics.

Accountability grades for high schools and districts also include the four-year graduation rate, student performance on Biology, U.S. History and ACT tests, and student participation and performance in advanced

coursework such as Advanced Placement and dual credit/dual enrollment courses.

The U.S. History assessment is the only statewide accountability measure of the academic standards for social studies. The other required assessments, MAAP and the ACT, measure student learning in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science only.

The U.S. History exam is currently given to high school students upon completion of the course. It is one of four end-of-course assessments that Board policy requires students to take to graduate.

The other tests, in Biology, Algebra I and English II, are required by federal law. Students don’t have to pass the subject area tests to graduate, as the SBE offers several options for students to earn a diploma.

U.S. History will remain a required course for graduation even if a decision is reached to eliminate the U.S. History exam.

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