

Reporter, The -
Camden, Miller,
Morgan
Camdenton, MO
Circ. 4100
From Page:
10
1/30/2008
14415



b1

Internet company helps task force

LAKE OF THE OZARKS - Socket, the largest Missouri-based telephone and Internet provider in the state, recently answered a call for information from Missouri's Rural High-Speed Internet Access Task Force by submitting a report to the committee.

Socket's owners, engineers and account representatives collaborated to form a six-point recommendation plan that will help Missouri reach its goal of improving rural access to high-speed Internet connections.

"We have always believed rural residents and businesses should be afforded the same technological advantages as their urban counterparts, and we're excited to see Missouri lawmakers taking a serious look at this issue," said George Pfenenger, Socket's president and CEO. "We are confident with the right government support the digital divide, which does exist, can be largely closed."

Socket's plan includes

quantifying and developing a public list of all areas currently lacking broadband access. The public list would greatly improve the understanding of underserved areas and could even promote broadband entry into those areas.

Socket also recommends the committee conduct a thorough investigation into up-and-coming technologies, such as broadband wireless or broadband-over-powerline, so all technologies get equal consideration.

It is possible and even likely that one of these new technologies will give underserved Missouri communities the high-speed Internet access they need.

The plan also includes a focus on subsidy equality.

In the event a broadband subsidy program or tax credit system is created, access to funds from those programs must be available to all providers and all technologies that are able to provide high-quality, high-speed

Internet access to underserved Missouri communities.

The subsidy must also be portable between providers based upon customer choice. It is important to avoid limiting any subsidy or other access program strictly to historic technologies such as DSL and/or cable broadband.

"It's critical that we don't undermine fair marketplace competition while trying to increase access," said Pfenenger. "The way to make certain these communities get affordable access to state-of-the-art technology and superior customer service is to make certain these rural customers have a choice of providers."

Founded in 1994, Socket is the largest Missouri-based telephone and Internet service provider in the state. Socket is a privately held company. Socket provides high-speed DSL and accelerated dial-up Internet service to business and residential clients.