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Contact: Tom Janenda, (207) 590-8815, tjanenda@elevate-cc.com

**MAINE FIBER COMPANY'S "THREE RING BINDER" RURAL BROADBAND PROJECT
EARNS BROAD SUPPORT AT STATE LEGISLATIVE HEARING**

Maine citizens, small businesses and Internet providers join bipartisan group of legislative and state leaders in supporting expansion of high-speed Internet access within over 100 Maine communities.

AUGUSTA, MAINE – Maine Fiber Company's Three Ring Binder project, which will bring high-speed Internet access to over 100 rural Maine communities and \$32 million in federal and private investment to Maine, added to its broad state and national support Wednesday at a public hearing of the State Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy.

The hearing focused on legislation (LD 1778) that will allow the federally funded fiber to be installed on 36,000 poles across the state efficiently so the project can meet its aggressive grant award timeline.

The legislation received strong support and momentum Wednesday from Maine citizens, small businesses and Internet providers who lack access to high-speed Internet today, as well as a broad, bipartisan group of legislative leaders and state officials.

"As a Maine-based company, we are pleased to have so much support and momentum from Maine people and State leaders," said Maine Fiber Company CEO Dwight Allison. "And we are committed to working in good faith with the Legislature and to quickly create jobs and economic opportunity by expanding access to high-speed Internet in areas that don't have it today."

In addition to testimony from Allison, those testifying and lending their support to Maine Fiber Company's legislation Wednesday included:

- ▶ House Speaker Hannah Pingree (D)
- ▶ Senator Peter Mills (R)
- ▶ Senator Chris Rector (R)
- ▶ Representative Cynthia Dill (D, Bill Sponsor)
- ▶ Rep. David Burns (R)
- ▶ Dick Thompson, Maine Chief Information Officer (Representing Baldacci Administration)
- ▶ Richard Davies, Maine Public Advocate
- ▶ Phil Lindley, Executive Director, Connect Maine Authority
- ▶ Denise Hoerten, Head of the Baldwin Broadband Expansion Committee
- ▶ Aisha Saidi, Sacopee Valley Broadband Initiative
- ▶ Susan Corbett, Axiom Technologies LLC
- ▶ Jason Philbrook, MidCoast Internet Solutions
- ▶ Fletcher Kitteredge, GWI
- ▶ Milton McBrierty, Larkin Enterprises

Wednesday's broad, bipartisan and nonpartisan support at the legislature for the Maine Fiber Company's Three Ring Binder project adds to impressive momentum that began well over a year ago.

The Three Ring Binder was reviewed, along with other proposals, in a rigorous application process at both the State and federal level. Along the way, based on the substance of the proposal, Three Ring Binder won the strong support and endorsement of Maine's 11-member Broadband Strategy Council, the State's Connect ME Authority, Maine Governor John Baldacci and all four members of Maine's Congressional Delegation – Senator Olympia Snowe, Senator Susan Collins, Representative Mike Michaud and Representative Chellie Pingree.

After scrutiny at the federal level, U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke came to Orono on December 17, 2009 and announced that Three Ring Binder had won \$25.4 million in stimulus funding “to bring high speed broadband access to communities that currently have little or no access to the technology.”

Last week, Maine Fiber Company was also honored to be invited to the White House for an event with President Obama on the first anniversary of the passage of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) to highlight the importance of the Three Ring Binder project.

Finally, the *Portland Press Herald* on Sunday, February 14th published a strong, lead editorial. Noting that “the losers in the current system are the potential customers who can't get high-speed access for their homes or businesses,” the paper called the Three Ring binder “good public policy” that is “creating equal opportunity for small service providers to meet a need and grow in a field that has an uncertain future.”

SUPPORT FOR MAINE FIBER COMPANY'S THREE RING BINDER IN AUGUSTA TODAY

▶ **House Speaker Hannah Pingree**

“I am Speaker of the House Hannah M. Pingree. I write in strong support of LD 1778, ‘An Act to Enable the Installation of Broadband Infrastructure... Coming from a rural area where broadband coverage is often elusive, I have sponsored and supported numerous initiatives to try to expand the network. While there has been some progress, it has not come at a fast enough pace, and Maine stands at a crossroads. If Maine is going to compete in the global marketplace, it needs world class broadband infrastructure that its people and businesses can rely upon... I urge you to unanimously vote ‘ought to pass’ on this important bill.”

▶ **Denise Hoerten, Head of Baldwin Broadband Expansion Committee**

“As head of the Baldwin Broadband Expansion Committee I see first hand how the lack of broadband service has affected the residents of Baldwin. Some have lost jobs and income. Others see their school age children struggle to complete assignments on a slow dial-up connection. Some travel to the local library, when it's open, or go to a relatives or friends house in order to do their homework or to gather information... Residents of rural Maine want, need and deserve the reliable high-speed broadband internet access that has yet to be made available to them. Hopefully this project will help supply that necessity to these residents and bring them into the 21st century.”

▶ **Aisha Saidi, Sacopee Valley Broadband Initiative**

“Many people in the Sacopee Valley area of Western Maine recently expressed their overwhelming support for high speed internet in our rural area. I am one of those people. We met at our local high school to hear speakers from ConnectME and Maine Fiber Company, as well as internet service providers RedZone, Cornerstone Communications, and Fairpoint... When we heard that we might actually get high-speed internet access from providers tying into the 3 Ring Binder

backbone, the people in our community had hope. For the sake of all rural Mainers, please help the 3 Ring Binder project to go forward quickly.”

▶ **Jason Philbrook, MidCoast Internet Solutions**

“We support LD1178; The Three Ring Binder project can not come soon enough... Rockland and many of the towns we are in are sort of off the beaten path when it comes to linking to the global Internet... This inhibits business opportunities for us and for our customers. The construction of the Three Ring Binder will do much to fix this issue of capacity and availability by bringing very high capacity links closer to providers in an open and nondiscriminatory manner.”

For more information or to speak with Dwight Allison, please contact Tom Janenda at tjanenda@elevate-cc.com or 207/590-8815.

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