

Bill would boost technology development in Central Louisiana

The Town Talk
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A bill designed to boost technology development in Central Louisiana and other specific parts of the state has been introduced in Congress.

U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-New Orleans, introduced Senate Bill 3735, and U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander, R-Quitman, has agreed to introduce the House companion bill, according to a news release from Landrieu's office.

The proposed legislation "makes common sense improvements to existing law so that software and computer technol-

ogy companies will be eligible for the Renewal Community/Empowerment Zone Program Incentives," the release states.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development program provides certain businesses in designated communities with "tax incentives, grants, loans and technical assistance to encourage investment in these communities, which have experienced severe economic decline. Under current law, software and technology companies are not eligible for these benefits."

"... the current structure of the program does not create incentives for computer, software

and other technology companies to expand in these communities," Landrieu said.

"This legislation is a viable economic stimulus plan for Louisiana," Alexander said. "Anytime we can provide tax relief for businesses and industry, it enables us to create jobs and to grow our economy."

"This legislation would clarify that companies that manufacture computer software, computer or peripheral equipment, and fiber optic cable related to computer use are eligible for Renewal Community/Empowerment Zone incentives," the news release states. "These companies are not currently eli-

gible to receive tax incentives and other benefits for hiring residents in these designated communities."

Louisiana has two Urban Renewal Communities in New Orleans/Jefferson Parish and Ouachita Parish. There are also Rural Renewal Communities in Central Louisiana and North Louisiana.

Winn Parish is among the parishes in the Northern Louisiana Renewal Community. The Central Louisiana Renewal Community includes Avoyelles, Beauregard, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, Natchitoches, Rapides, Sabine and Vernon.