



USTELECOM | THE BROADBAND ASSOCIATION



Computer & Communications
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Internet Association



December 2, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

We, the undersigned organizations, write today to urge you to include critically needed investments in broadband in year-end legislation that will benefit your constituents—as well as Americans across the nation.

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, America's broadband, communications infrastructure, cloud, and application providers have kept our communities connected and provided tools to help us live remotely. Even as the global economy closed down, America's internet has remained open, strong, and resilient, ensuring our nation and our families can continue to work, learn, and function.

Yet despite the progress we continue to make as a nation to achieve the goal of universal service, there remains several million Americans who lack access to broadband.

Congress has a unique and urgent opportunity to address the near-term broadband needs of millions of families and students. Time is critical. As schools and businesses close again, broadband service offers a lifeline to health services, continuing education, and skilling and employment opportunities. Therefore, as you finalize end of year legislation, we respectfully ask you to support funding for broadband service for families and students by extending the current CARES Act funding and ensuring that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has funding to develop accurate broadband maps. More specifically, in order to address the near-term crisis, we respectfully ask that you support the following:

Funding for Broadband Adoption, Starting With Our Kids. According to the 2018 American Community Survey, households with annual incomes below \$35,000 accounted for 60 percent of those without broadband. Funding is needed right away to ensure school children and families currently without broadband service can obtain a device and subscribe to broadband. This is especially needed now to empower households to respond to the educational, economic, social, and healthcare impacts created by COVID-19.

Investment for Broadband Deployment. Current CARES Act funding is being used by some states to deploy broadband, and clarifying the timeframe for such funding to be extended to complete those existing projects through 2021 should be a priority to continue to bridge the digital divide. Solutions for broadband connectivity for unserved homes, businesses, schools, libraries, and healthcare facilities can facilitate educational opportunities, keep citizens healthy and gainfully employed, and help us all to better weather the challenges of the pandemic.

Funding for Accurate Broadband Mapping. Our nation can more efficiently and cost-effectively address the broadband challenge with accurate data. The FCC has developed a new national methodology to improve broadband mapping, ensuring every federal broadband program dollar can be deployed as quickly as possible where it is needed most. But the FCC cannot get started without funding. So, time is of the essence. The FCC must have the funding now that it needs to implement its new methodology.

We recognize and applaud the strong bipartisan support for bringing the benefits of broadband to all Americans. Now we urge you to convert that support into action. If we are to effectively weather the challenges before us and restart our economy, it is critical that funding is provided to ensure that Americans in need have broadband service today, and the FCC is able to begin its work to develop more accurate maps now.

As we address the near terms challenges, there is still more work to do. In the longer-term, we ask that you ensure that all unserved Americans have a high-speed broadband connection to their home and have a permanent program that can help with affording a broadband service and device.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We stand ready to assist in whatever way we can.

Sincerely,

/s/ Chip Pickering

Chip Pickering
CEO
INCOMPAS

/s/ Gary Bolton

Gary Bolton
President and CEO
Fiber Broadband Association

/s/ Jack Alexander

Jack Alexander
President
Rural & Agriculture Council of America

/s/ Claude Aiken

Claude Aiken
President & CEO
WISPA

/s/ Richard T. Cullen

Richard T. Cullen
Executive Director
Connect Americans Now

/s/ Jon Berroya

Jon Berroya
Interim President & CEO
Internet Association

/s/ Jonathan Spalter

Jonathan Spalter
President & CEO
USTelecom – The Broadband Association

/s/ Tom Quaadman

Tom Quaadman
Executive Vice President
U.S. Chamber Technology Engagement
Center

/s/ Matt Schruers

Matt Schruers
President
Computer & Communications Industry
Association

/s/ Linda Moore

Linda Moore
President and CEO
TechNet

/s/ Jonathan S. Adelstein

Jonathan S. Adelstein
President and CEO
WIA – the Wireless Infrastructure
Association

/s/ Michael K. Powell

Michael K. Powell
President & CEO
NCTA – The Internet & Television
Association