



December 3, 2020

Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate,
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives,
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on
Appropriations
United States Senate,
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on
Appropriations
United States House of Representatives,
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable John Kennedy
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General
Government
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Mike Quigley
Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General
Government
United States House of Representatives,
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Christopher Coons
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on
Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and
General Government
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Steve Womack
Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on
Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and
General Government
United States House of Representatives,
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Kennedy, Ranking Member Coons, Chairman Quigley and Ranking Member Womack:

Connect Americans Now (CAN) writes to respectfully encourage Congress to swiftly and fully fund implementation of the Broadband DATA Act to allow for urgently needed improvements to the nation's broadband mapping data. These improvements, which will help accurately measure the full scale and location of the digital divide in America, are essential to guiding public and private investments to close the broadband gap.

CAN is a coalition of more than 275 leading organizations and companies representing voices for agriculture, health care, education, small business, technology, veterans, rural advocacy and more – committed to completely and swiftly eliminating the digital divide in America by supporting a mixed-technology approach that leverages the full potential of every tool at the nation's disposal.



CAN has been a strong proponent of more precise broadband maps to better direct public and private investments in broadband and enthusiastically supported the bipartisan Broadband DATA Act, which Congress passed, and President Trump signed into law earlier this year.

The passage of this important legislation demonstrated the commitment of lawmakers, in both parties, to working collaboratively to address the digital divide that leaves millions of Americans without access to broadband internet.

Now, Congress must finish the job by providing the resources needed for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to begin implementation of this important solution at the first available opportunity. Without funding for implementation, the FCC cannot begin the critical work of producing new, accurate maps.

There is broad bipartisan consensus in Congress and at the FCC that the current FCC broadband data maps underestimate the scale of the digital divide and hamper the effectiveness of investments to expand connectivity. According to the latest FCC data, there are at least 14.5 million Americans who lack access to broadband service, but a study conducted earlier this year by BroadbandNow found an estimated 42 million Americans lack access to broadband service.

The development of accurate broadband maps will help maximize public investments made in expanding broadband connectivity, including by guiding areas of focus and billions of dollars of federal resources under programs like the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF). Improved data will both limit the possibility of overbuilding while also ensuring unserved Americans are not left behind in efforts to close the digital divide.

For the millions of Americans who lack access to a broadband connection, the pandemic has exacerbated the many challenges associated with the digital divide. Students without broadband at home can struggle to keep up with remote learning and those who have returned to in-person class still must grapple with the homework gap. Patients may be unable to access telehealth solutions that can keep them healthy and allow them to avoid strained facilities. A lack of access to broadband can mean a lack of access to specialists and IoT innovation in health care. Farmers and ranchers can be placed at a competitive disadvantage in a global market, unable to unlock the potential of precision agriculture technology and remote monitoring equipment that can optimize irrigation, conserve resources and increase yields.

Congress must act to eliminate the digital divide for these Americans. The swift and full funding of improved broadband maps will be an important first step.

Thank you for your consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Richard T. Cullen
Executive Director
Connect Americans Now