American Connection Project
Broadband Policy Statements

Infrastructure

Reliable high-speed internet service has become an integral piece of America's infrastructure. Yet, there are still too many in both rural and urban parts of our country who do not have access to reliable, affordable service. The American Connection Project Policy Coalition is supportive of increasing investments in long-term, sustainable broadband infrastructure, and decreasing barriers to deployment of new infrastructure to allow for solutions that will meet the needs of every community, including but not limited to minority communities.

Funding

We support Congress investing at least $80 billion to close the digital divide across America, an investment supported by both FCC and USDA reports. An FCC report from 2017[1] estimates it would cost at least $80 billion to bring high-speed internet to the remaining parts of our country that do not have access. Last year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a report[2], citing Deloitte data, that estimated it would require "between $130 and $150 billion over the next five to seven years, to adequately support rural coverage and 5G wireless densification." COVID-19 has highlighted the urgency for a significant investment from the federal government. In order to build and deploy long-term, sustainable broadband infrastructure that would expand access for rural, urban, and suburban communities across the country that do not have service today, an investment of at least $80 billion is necessary; an investment that is supported by the data in the aforementioned reports. Furthermore, we encourage governors and state legislatures to appropriate necessary resources to deploy broadband infrastructure in their states.

Mapping

Congress and federal agencies should continue to encourage more accurate and granular reporting of broadband coverage data to highlight service gaps by swiftly implementing the Broadband DATA Act passed into law in March 2020 and funded in December 2020. We also encourage the FCC to map the broadband available to community anchor institutions (such as schools, libraries, health care providers, etc.). Moreover, we encourage the FCC to continue working with the Precision Ag Connectivity Task Force to incorporate information regarding the availability of broadband on cropland and ranchland into publicly available broadband coverage maps. Although the process to change the mapping procedures is underway, FCC Form 477 data is currently self-reported by the

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[1] Federal Communications Commission Study: *Improving the Nation's Digital Infrastructure:*
https://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2017/db0119/DOC-343135A1.pdf
[2] United States Department of Agriculture: *A Case for Rural Broadband:*
https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/case-for-rural-broadband.pdf

industry at a census block level and is unverified, resulting in over-estimating broadband availability which creates inefficiencies in the deployment of scarce federal dollars.

Coordination

We support efforts to provide leadership and coordination at the executive branch level in the federal government to position our country as a technology leader to ensure our economic competitiveness and to maintain strong national security. Further, we support leadership and coordination to ensure that both federal and state investments in technology infrastructure are deployed in the most efficient and effective ways to address the digital divide. Federal dollars directed toward retail broadband deployment should continue to be coordinated with existing federal broadband programs to prevent duplication of scarce federal resources. For example, the federal government should generally avoid funding two different retail broadband networks operated by two different providers via two different programs to the same location. However, if a provider receiving support is not meeting its obligations, or if the federal program does not require adequate service, federal funds should be open to another provider to provide robust and reliable service.

Affordability and Digital Inclusion

We support state and federal funding to provide needed assistance to low-income communities and consumers to make broadband service more affordable and to promote broadband adoption. The coalition supports congressional action to create a permanent program to lower the cost of a broadband subscription, defray the cost of a computing device, and fund community readiness programs designed to provide digital literacy and inclusion. In addition to the millions of Americans who do not have access to broadband infrastructure, millions more are not able to access high-speed broadband because of the lack of affordable and reliable service, a device, and essential digital skills. Moreover, we know that many communities across America do not have the capacity and technical resources available to leverage state and federal programs to build out the needed infrastructure to close the digital divide in their communities. State and federal funding would provide much-needed assistance to ensure families and communities can access broadband for the many vital services it enables, including telehealth, distance education, and the ability to conduct daily business in a competitive 21st century global economy.

About the American Connection Project Policy Coalition

The American Connection Project Policy Coalition represents more than 160 companies and organizations from multiple economic sectors who are working together to bring high-speed internet access to all Americans. The Coalition understands that digital connectivity is not a luxury, but rather a basic necessity for everyday life. Drawing from their cross-sector expertise, members are making private investments to bridge the digital divide while advocating at the state and federal levels for permanent solutions. More information can be found at americanconnectionproject.com.

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