



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
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Pallone Urges Congress to Make Meaningful Investments in Broadband Deployment

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at a Communications and Technology Subcommittee hearing on “Broadband: Deploying America’s 21st Century Infrastructure.”*

Thank you, Chairman Blackburn and Ranking Member Doyle, for holding this hearing. And thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

In these uncertain economic times, deploying more secure, high-speed internet means providing more opportunities for more people—opportunities to get a proper education, to apply for new jobs, or to train for a new career. That’s why the Democratic members of this subcommittee have introduced bills to maximize this potential—especially for those that are struggling to find good jobs. Our bills also give the FCC a key role in keeping our networks secure.

These efforts are critical because secure broadband can help give all Americans a fair shot—even in the corners of the country that are hardest to reach. During the last Congress, we worked to draft a discussion bill that had bipartisan support here on our Committee. We were also happy to move forward with Congresswoman Eshoo’s dig-once bill.

And we were ready to get back to work again this year. But without prior consultation, Republicans unilaterally revised this bipartisan bill. At this point we are still reviewing the new draft, but I would have hoped that the Republican Majority would have consulted with us prior to revising the legislation and announcing this legislative hearing.

At the same time, the proposals in this bill will only get us so far. More critically, we must include broadband in our efforts to overhaul the nation’s infrastructure. Congress needs to invest in a connected future. I have seen some suggest that tax incentives will somehow increase broadband in rural and tribal areas. But tax cuts alone won’t get it done—especially in areas where there is not a strong business case like tribal lands.

The FCC staff recently released a report showing what it will actually take to deploy to these remote areas, and explaining that it will cost at least \$40 billion to reach 98 percent of the population. The costs go up dramatically to reach the last 2 percent. That's a serious investment that we should be discussing as part of any infrastructure bill.

Unfortunately, the Trump Administration is ignoring the needs of the people in rural America and tribal lands. The President's budget would brutally cut off agencies like the U.S. Economic Development Administration and the Appalachian Regional Commission. These agencies are critical to support deployment in the parts of the country that could use the jobs that come with more broadband.

This Congress must reject the President's budget. And we must pass a real infrastructure bill that includes at least the \$40 billion to make sure 98 percent of country gets broadband.

Today's witnesses are the types of experts we need to hear from to lay the foundation for that legislation.

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