

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Markup of 28 Bills, Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

November 18, 2025

I am glad the Committee is finally getting back to work after Republicans shut down the government for more than 40 days, although it is outrageous that Speaker Johnson kept the House out of session during the entire shutdown and refused to work with Democrats to make health care more affordable for Americans.

After such a long and painful hiatus, it is unfortunate that our Republican colleagues have decided the first order of business in this Committee is a vote on their so-called broadband infrastructure permitting reform legislation. If Republicans were really serious about ensuring every American has access to affordable, high speed internet, they would join us in fighting the Trump Administration for its unacceptable delays of broadband deployment projects that were ready months ago.

This is the same package of partisan bills that Republicans pushed last Congress. And after investing so much time and energy in this Committee on it, our Republican colleagues never even put it on the floor for a vote. There are two simple reasons for this.

First, the package is full of bad ideas that are unpopular with members on both sides of the aisle. Putting arbitrary deadlines on state, local, and Tribal governments to start and finish complicated permit reviews — under threat of an automatic construction approval — is opposed across the board by the local officials who are responsible for doing the work. Other provisions would gut any local communities' ability to protect historic and culturally significant sites — especially for Tribal communities. All together, these are the kind of ideas that sound like reform only in Washington.

These bills also went nowhere because they don't meaningfully address true barriers to broadband deployment that stakeholders have consistently raised with the Committee for almost a decade. For instance, the partisan Republican permitting bill does NOT attempt to fix the instability in the market around pole attachments. Nor does their legislation make even a modest investment to hire sufficient numbers of qualified staff to speed up permit reviews inside federal agencies.

This is especially disappointing given that the Biden Administration did make those investments, only to have those personnel fired by Trump's political appointees. But our colleagues will sit across the room and go on and on about red tape as if these delays are not a direct result of Republicans' actions.

Right now, broadband deployment all across the nation is being delayed by the Trump Administration and Congressional Republicans are standing on the sidelines and watching it happen. Earlier this year, the Trump Administration delayed more than \$42 billion in broadband funding that we passed as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that was ready to go out to states as part of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program. The Administration made states go back to the drawing board on their state program plans — delaying broadband deployments. The Trump Administration's new policy requires states and territories to select the cheapest bids regardless of whether those bids are the best quality or most cost-effective over time.

Republicans spent years demonizing the Biden Administration for the time it took to carefully execute a massive, highly prescriptive broadband program to connect all Americans to affordable, reliable, high speed internet. But now, almost a year later, Republicans have not connected a single household to high-speed internet. In fact, the Trump Administration continues to delay the program, guaranteeing that rural and low-income communities get slower and less reliable internet service — and they are breaking the law to do it.

Despite Republicans' ongoing sabotage of the BEAD Program, House Democrats have shown time and time again our commitment to the goal of ensuring everyone has access to fast, reliable, and affordable internet service. Democrats will continue to work across the aisle to address any real, structural barriers to deploying communications infrastructure across the country that stand in the way of progress.

That is why I support the six bipartisan bills that we will consider today. These bills aim to address issues that cause unnecessary delays and difficulty in the permitting process dealing with federal agencies, like updating antiquated systems and requiring standard, transparent fee structures across the board.

I applaud the leadership of members on both sides of the aisle on these bipartisan bills and look forward to supporting them today.

With that I yield back the balance of my time.