



JONATHAN SPALTER
President and Chief Executive Officer

May 22, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

USTelecom and our national membership of large and small internet service providers (ISPs), suppliers and manufacturers commend you for prioritizing broadband connectivity in your work as leaders of the Energy & Commerce Committee.

Broadband is as critical to America's global competitiveness as reliable roads, bridges and energy systems. We agree that pushing more connectivity into unserved parts of America will require a smart and sustained partnership between government and broadband providers that prioritizes funding to communities on the wrong side of the digital divide.

The LIFT America Act is a positive first step toward our shared goal of getting more Americans online, and our members are grateful for this major federal commitment to connectivity. As the Committee debates this comprehensive investment in broadband infrastructure, we urge your consideration of several provisions to speed broadband service to unserved communities, particularly in rural America.

1. Direct spending will be essential in parts of the country where there may not be a viable business case to deploy next-generation networks. We appreciate the Committee's plan for new broadband spending to be administered primarily by the FCC, the expert agency with experience developing and distributing targeted funding for broadband deployment.
2. Federal broadband funding should be targeted to areas of the country truly unserved by broadband and not used to construct duplicative networks that overbuild a provider's existing infrastructure.
3. Fiber is the future, and rural 5G connectivity cannot exist without a robust fiber backbone. Any infrastructure legislation should prioritize terrestrial broadband that will pave the way for a 5G future. This future includes the Internet of Things and gives us the opportunity to consider how to make infrastructure like roads and bridges "smart" in the process. We should build "broadband once" to make our infrastructure withstand the test of time.
4. Because the cost of delivering resilient and reliable broadband connectivity naturally varies (depending on geography and population), legislation should establish reasonable and realistic service parameters for speed, latency and cost—and allocate funding accordingly.

5. State and local rights of way issues can impede the efficient deployment of broadband, therefore federal legislation should include a coordinated federal government effort to standardize and streamline permitting for wired broadband, wireless backhaul and tower connectivity. We must also be mindful to ensure that the rules of the road help spur continued investment in fiber to increase speeds on existing networks and support facilities-based deployment in harder to reach areas.
6. The cost of relocating telecommunications facilities during municipal construction projects in most cases is borne by ISPs. Legislation should include mechanisms for providers to recover those outlays because every dollar of capital spent to relocate connection facilities is a dollar not spent on deploying or upgrading broadband networks.

Thank you for your bipartisan leadership on broadband policy, especially incentivizing deployment as deep into rural America as possible. Broadband investments by Congress today will pay dividends in the form of national productivity, connectivity and job growth tomorrow.

We look forward to working with the Committee on this legislation and helping pass a lasting solution that ensures our nation's broadband infrastructure can reach every American family, community and enterprise that still needs it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Spalter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jonathan Spalter
President and CEO
USTelecom – The Broadband Association

Cc: The Honorable Mike Doyle
The Honorable Bob Latta