

Closing the Digital Divide Through the Infrastructure Package

Congress Must Promote Broadband Affordability to Close the Digital Divide

Even if broadband is available, it is not always affordable, and consequently is not adopted. About [30 million](#) households do not subscribe to broadband when it is available, [including](#) 29% of rural homes and 28% of non-rural homes.

- Congress should provide at least \$15 billion to continue the ***Emergency Broadband Benefit***, and provide the FCC with ongoing authority to modify the program over time.
- Congress should adopt the following to allow any broadband benefit to succeed:
 - Require relevant agencies to enter into data matching agreements with USAC to enable ***automatic verification***. [Studies show](#) a majority of consumers who undergo a manual process abandon their applications.
 - Increase enrollment by authorizing funding for ***Digital Navigators*** and by ***advertising the availability*** of a broadband subsidy.
 - Require providers to make all plans eligible for the benefit, or at least allow subscribers to return to previously priced plans, in order to ***prevent upselling***.

Congress Must Promote Digital Inclusion to Close the Digital Divide

Even if broadband is available and affordable, individuals and families can't connect because they can't afford a computer, or don't have the digital literacy skills they need to engage online.

- Congress should provide at least \$5 billion for the ***Digital Equity Act*** over five years.
- Congress has previously supported the purchase of devices, and should create a \$5 billion ***voucher program*** to support low-income individuals in purchasing a ***computer or tablet*** directly from a retail outlet or refurbisher. This program should ensure that eligibility is on an individual basis so family members can connect simultaneously.

Congress Must Promote Future Proof Broadband Deployment to Close the Digital Divide

Although broadband is critical, our nation has a large digital divide, leaving those on the wrong side of it struggling to connect. Currently, more than [42 million](#) Americans don't have the ability to purchase broadband, and many others struggle with slow, unreliable connections.

- Investments in broadband deployment should meet household and business needs now and in the future -- that means at least ***100/100 Mbps*** speed.
- Although competition is key to lowering prices, [more than](#) 20% of households have access to just one fixed provider offering broadband speeds. To promote competition, Congress should prioritize deployment funds for ***open access infrastructure*** projects.
- Congress should ensure that communities are empowered to bring broadband to their residents where broadband providers are reluctant to serve. Congress can preempt local and state bans on ***municipally-owned broadband***.
- Congress should direct the FCC to promulgate rules to ***prevent digital redlining***, so that everyone, regardless of their income or demographic characteristics, can have access to high-speed, reliable broadband.