



May 11, 2021

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi  
1236 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senate Majority Leader Schumer, House Speaker Pelosi, Senate Republican Leader McConnell, and House Republican Leader McCarthy:

While there has been progress to close the digital divide, it is clear that more needs to be done. ACI urges Congress to continue its efforts to promote broadband availability and adoption. Yet, we also urge Congress to remain cautious of current proposals on the table that have a high probability of becoming counterproductive by going against empirical evidence and wasting taxpayer dollars.

Proposals like the American Jobs Plan that prioritize local governments, nonprofits and co-ops building broadband networks to compete with private companies are doomed to fail. The faulty assumption that these entities will have lower costs for building networks than private internet service providers is not corroborated by [empirical evidence](#). A plethora of empirical research shows [why and how government-run networks fail](#) to deliver access to reliable, high quality, affordable broadband. The overwhelming evidence points to the increased inefficiency of these networks due to the [high fixed cost investments and the long-term debt obligations](#) for the local residents, leading to [low adoption rates](#) and further cross-subsidization of the internet service. In addition, government-owner networks do not invest in research and development, and they do not contribute to standards setting.

Proposals that advocate closing the digital divide on the promise of future-proof networks need to be reassessed. Running cable to every unserved home is not only financially unfeasible, it is also not ideal. Proposals should instead prioritize the variety of different technologies to meet the geographical diversity needs of unserved communities. Technological alternatives, such as low Earth orbiting satellites that are currently being deployed, have great potential to provide ubiquitous high-speed broadband services, including service to very remote areas and tribal lands.

Emotional arguments should not overshadow empirical evidence and fiscal responsibility. Instead of dismissing the progress made thus far, Congress should promote efforts that support and build on our current successful, private-sector-led broadband model to finally fill the broadband gaps. Specifically, we need continued efforts that prioritize the streamlining of local deployment processes and eliminate barriers to deployment.

Policy should certainly aim to close the rural-broadband gap once and for all, but there are smart and effective ways of doing so. Overthrowing private competition for government sponsored broadband would be irresponsible towards the communities that need the broadband door unlocked to access better education, improved healthcare, and higher-skilled jobs.

Respectfully,

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