

CWA Broadband Infrastructure Proposal



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Broadband is the essential infrastructure of the 21st century. A high-speed Internet connection provides a gateway to economic growth, jobs, education, healthcare, public safety, energy efficiency, civic participation, and communication among friends and family. Despite its importance, broadband access and use remains dismal.

Over the last 30 years, deregulation has left policymakers with few tools to require universal buildout of affordable high-speed networks for all communi-

ties. Without competition and regulatory oversight, big cable monopolies charge working people high prices and deliver poor service and have few or no incentives to invest in new services and technology.

CWA urges members of Congress to implement the following broadband infrastructure solutions that will best serve working people. By doing so, it will help guarantee universal access to high-speed broadband, close the digital divide, and promote good jobs in the telecommunications industry.

More than 24 million Americans - including 19 million rural Americans - still lack access to broadband service at 25/3 Mbps speeds.

2018 Broadband Deployment Report, Federal Communications Commission

About half of US households have only one choice - cable - for high-speed broadband.

2018 Broadband Deployment Report, Federal Communications Commission

Broadband use and adoption remain below optimal levels: only 67 percent of people in the US have a wired broadband connection. The percentage is even worse for low-income, African-American, and Hispanic communities.

Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet 2018, Pew Research Center

1. Good Jobs and Labor Standards

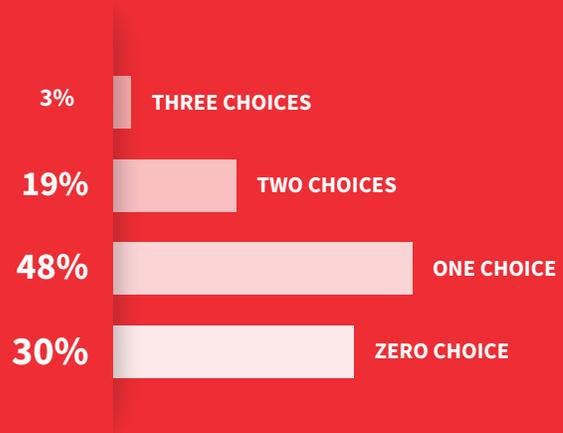
Public policy that encourages investment in broadband networks must be grounded in policies that support the growth of good jobs, fair labor standards, and respect for workers' rights in the telecommunications industry.

To achieve these goals, Congress should require that any group who receives public assistance to build out broadband infrastructure must:

- a. Pay prevailing wages and benefits;
- b. Respect existing collective bargaining agreements and related telecommunication work jurisdiction;
- c. Comply with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations, on labor, employment, environmental, and workplace health and safety; and
- d. If workers on the federally-supported broadband project are not covered by an existing collective bargaining agreement:
 - i. Permit workers to consider organizing a union by providing union access to the workers and remaining neutral about unionization in the workplace; and,
 - ii. Recognize the union as the collective bargaining representative, if the employees choose to form a union by presenting valid authorization cards from a majority of employees in the bargaining unit; and
 - iii. If an initial collective bargaining agreement is not reached within 90 days, refer the dispute to an arbitration board at the request of the union or the employer; Incorporate these labor standards into their agreements with contractors and subcontractors.

U.S. Households: Choices of Broadband Networks

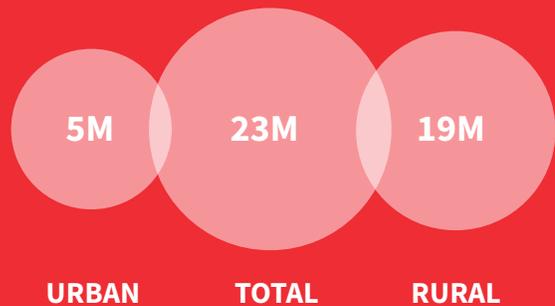
Minimum broadband speeds of 25/3 Mbps



FCC's Internet Access Services Report 06/30/15

U.S. Broadband Access

Minimum broadband speeds of 25/3 Mbps



Households that still lacks access to broadband speeds of 25 Mbps for downloads and 3 Mbps for uploads (25/3 Mbps) -- the FCC's definition of the minimum expectable broadband speeds.

2. Closing the Rural Digital Divide

A. Accelerate the buildout of broadband to unserved communities with \$40 billion in direct funding.

An unserved community eligible for funding is a community that lacks access to broadband speeds of 25 Mbps for downloads and 3 Mbps for uploads (25/3 Mbps) -- the FCC's definition of the minimum expectable broadband speeds. The FCC calculates that \$40 billion would provide the support the private sector needs to reach 98 percent of the currently unserved, largely rural communities with broadband infrastructure that will not readily become obsolete (i.e., future-proof). In planning a broadband infrastructure program, Congress should set standards that require robust speeds, minimal delays, and other quality measures, including the labor standards outlined above to promote employment of skilled, career employees and good jobs in local communities. To ensure efficient allocation of resources, the broadband infrastructure program should avoid duplicative overbuilding and build upon the success of the FCC's Connect America Fund in leveraging expertise, maximizing sustainability, and speed of deployment. Reverse auctions can serve as an effective distribution mechanism of resources.



67%

Only 67 percent of people in the US have a wired broadband connection.

B. Buildout of Next Generation Networks

i. Raise the “broadband speed” benchmark to 100/10 Mbps. The United States is falling behind other nations in terms of broadband speeds. We do not even break the top-10. If the FCC won't take the appropriate action to correct this, Congress should set the broadband benchmark to 100/10 Mbps to encourage high-speed broadband deployment that will ensure the United States leads the world in Internet speeds and deployment.

ii. Fiber buildout and Smart cities. The need for universal affordable high-speed broadband for homes, businesses, and community institutions is crucial. Making sure these fiber optic lines are constantly updated and maintained ensures that we are ready to keep the US ahead of the curve. For example, a partnership between Verizon and the City of Boston allowed Verizon to build their fiber network through the “One Fiber” initiative that expanded residential broadband and provided the city with smart transportation technology.

Congress should fund a “Model Digital Communities” grant program through a public-private partnership model, to develop fast and reliable infrastructure that supports residential broadband, is flexible enough to accommodate new business models, and fosters transparency of the entire buildout process. Additionally, the “Model Digital Communities” grant program should require all recipients to abide by the labor standards outlined above.

iii. Fiber buildout and municipal broadband. CWA supports a system of rules that would hold broadband service providers accountable to build universal, quality fiber networks. But such a system of rules does not currently exist and this continues to impact working people who are left behind without a reliable connection to the Internet. Problems such as these have led some communities to consider financing, building, and operating their own broadband networks. However, the record shows that most of these projects have not been successful.

If the major broadband service providers refuse to build universal high-speed fiber networks, policymakers may develop plans for municipal broadband initiatives. In order for CWA to support such municipal broadband projects, at a minimum, they must include provisions for good jobs, labor standards, and workers' rights; demonstrate financial and operational viability; and include enforceable commitments to provide affordable high-speed broadband access to unserved or underserved communities.

iv. 5G wireless and small cell technology. Wireless companies are installing hundreds of thousands of "small cells" (low-powered cellular radios) on utility and light poles to increase the power of today's 4G wireless networks and in preparation for next-generation 5G networks. Local governments across the country are crafting rules that encourage private sector installation of small cells consistent with their responsibility to protect public rights of way and to support digital inclusion programs. Congress should resist pressure from corporate lobbyists to preempt local authority. Congress should also recognize that 5G wireless networks rely on a robust, ubiquitous fiber infrastructure.

C. Affordable Broadband for All

v. Close Homework Gap with spectrum auction.

Seven in ten teachers assign homework that requires access to broadband. At the same time, 12 million children do not have the access to broadband at home which they need to complete their homework assignments.

This Homework Gap is unacceptable. Congress must act now and address this problem. The FCC has unused

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2.5 GHz licenses and the authority to auction off that spectrum. Congress should direct the FCC to do so, and use a portion of those auction funds to begin a Homework Gap initiative to help students across the country.

vi. Protect and support the Lifeline program.

About 40 million people are eligible for the Lifeline program, which provides a modest monthly subsidy to help low-income households access essential communications services, including broadband. Yet only 10 million people have enrolled in the program. The current FCC Chairman, Ajit Pai, has not done enough to get the remaining 30 million people signed up to the program. Instead his FCC has attacked the program by instituting unnecessary restrictions and caps, which threaten to undermine this vital program. His scheme has caused enrollment in the Lifeline program to drop by 30 percent. Congress should act to protect the Lifeline program from these attacks, and support the low-income households who rely on it.

Homework Gap



Children with out access to broadband
12 Million



Teachers who assign homework online
70%

Lifeline Program



People who haven't been enrolled in the program
30 Million



Enrollment decline under Ajit Pai's FCC
30%

CWA