



COMMITTEE ON  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
DEMOCRATS  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT**

[CJ Young](#) – (202) 225-5735

## **Pallone Remarks at Rural Broadband Hearing**

*“Rather than making real and substantial investments in our nation’s crumbling infrastructure, [Republicans] instead chose to throw billions of dollars in tax breaks at the wealthy who simply do not need them.”*

**Washington, D.C.** – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Communications and Technology hearing on “Realizing the Benefits of Rural Broadband: Challenges and Solutions:”*

From the start of the Trump Administration, there has been a bipartisan call to modernize America’s infrastructure, including expanding broadband to communities that need it. This takes significant resources and cannot be done simply through deregulation or streamlining processes. Actual investments are needed, and we must see states and local governments as partners—not adversaries. Committee Democrats recognized the need for real investment and developed legislative proposals to build the modern, resilient infrastructure Americans need and deserve.

First, [the LIFT America Act](#) authorizes \$40 billion in grants for the deployment of secure and resilient broadband. This comprehensive infrastructure bill, which is supported by every Democrat on this Committee, also invests in drinking water infrastructure, energy infrastructure, health care infrastructure, and brownfields redevelopment. These investments will make Americans more competitive, safer, healthier, and connected.

Second, Mr. Lujan, along with a number of other Democrats on the Committee, introduced the [Broadband Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act](#). This bill would authorize \$5 billion worth of secured loans, loan guarantees, and lines of credit to finance public private partnerships for broadband deployment.

Third, Mr. Tonko has introduced the [ACCESS Broadband Act](#), which was just reported by this Committee to the full House of Representatives last week. This bill would create an Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth to help ensure we’re using existing broadband programs, and

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new ones, to get the most bang for the buck. I urge my colleagues to bring this bill to the House Floor as soon as possible.

Committee Democrats have also put forward many other innovative solutions that could make a real change in connecting the unconnected and opening up our airwaves for new wireless broadband services.

Unfortunately, the Administration and my Republican colleagues have placed infrastructure legislation on the backburner behind its tax scam that benefits large corporations and the wealthiest few. Rather than making real and substantial investments in our nation's crumbling infrastructure, they instead chose to throw billions of dollars in tax breaks at the wealthy who simply do not need them.

We need to invest in broadband infrastructure, particularly in rural and urban communities that have been left behind. According to the FCC, 30 percent of Americans in rural areas – and 35 percent of Americans living on tribal lands – lack access to baseline broadband service. And this is based on mapping data that we know underreports the scope of the problem.

It is time to act. Democrats have bold proposals that will actually drive broadband deployment in all 50 states. These proposals are technologically neutral, and open the door to all internet service providers that can deliver fast and secure broadband access. We need to think outside the box in our effort to connect all Americans to the benefits of the internet.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how we can ensure access to high-speed broadband throughout America, including rural communities.

On a brief personal note, we were all incredibly saddened to hear that Robin Colwell of the subcommittee's majority staff lost her husband—Bill—over the weekend following his battle with cancer. I want to offer our deepest condolences and sympathies to her and her family in this trying time.

With that, I yield the balance of my time.

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