

Chairman Brett Guthrie Opening Statement
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Fixing Biden’s Broadband Blunder”
Wednesday, March 5, 2025 – 2:00 PM ET

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for bringing us together for this important hearing on closing the digital divide. I would also like to thank the witnesses for your participation and lending your expertise to this important discussion. As a point of personal privilege, I would like to give a special welcome to Greg Hale from Logan County, Kentucky. I have known Greg for years and know he understands the challenges of getting broadband to our neighbors who live in the rural parts of our state. I appreciate his hard work to expand broadband access in south central Kentucky.

I represent many rural and growing communities in Kentucky’s Second District. Broadband access is critical for our students to complete their homework, and for Americans to connect with their doctors and stay in touch with friends and loved ones. Connectivity also bolsters economic development opportunities in our communities.

The private and public sector investments totaling in the billions of dollars to build out communications infrastructure across the country have yet to close the digital divide for many Americans, including many of my constituents, who lack access to broadband at home.

On the federal level alone, there are more than 130 broadband programs across 15 different agencies, all with varying amounts of funding and requirements.

In 2021, the BEAD program had more than \$42 billion in taxpayer dollars for broadband expansion in unserved areas, and yet not a single inch of fiber has been laid as a result. Despite naming Vice President Harris “broadband czar,” the Biden-Harris Administration failed to deliver on their promise of connecting all Americans through BEAD by failing to connect even one American.

A one-size-fits-all approach does not work. As a first step, the program needs to be reformed to be technology-neutral so states have the flexibility to choose what technology is appropriate for

them. We also need to eliminate the burdensome and unnecessary regulations that the Biden-Harris Administration imposed that have done nothing but slow down the process. This program has been a failure of mass proportions, and we must act quickly to course-correct so that billions of American taxpayer dollars are not wasted.

In addition to BEAD, we also need to address the FCC's Universal Service Fund (USF). This program supports broadband service in high-cost, often rural, areas, aids schools, libraries, and rural health centers access connectivity, and helps low-income Americans afford broadband service.

The constitutionality of the USF is being challenged at the Supreme Court, and if the Court ultimately holds that the USF is unconstitutional, the program will come to an end, a devastating outcome, leaving many Americans without service. Congress must act to affirm the constitutionality of this program, and I hope this is an area where we can find a bipartisan solution.

In addition to addressing this immediate need, we also need to address the long-term sustainability of the USF. After almost 30 years, Congress needs to reevaluate the role that the USF should play in providing support, particularly after the significant investment in broadband over the past five years.

I look forward to today's discussion. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

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