

**Opening Statement for Chairman Richard Hudson
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Fixing Biden’s Broadband Blunder”
Wednesday March 5, 2025**

Closing the digital divide is a top priority for this Committee. Too many Americans, particularly those in rural America, like so many places in my home state of North Carolina, lack access to reliable high-speed broadband. With so much of everyday life requiring an internet connection, this is a vital need.

BEAD Reform

Since 2020, Congress has provided billions of dollars to connect unserved Americans. The most significant effort is the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act or I-I-J-A. This massive bill included the \$42.5 billion Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

It has been over 3 years since the IIJA became law, and we are still waiting for the first home to be connected using these funds. I think we should understand how this happened.

First, FCC maps that Biden-FCC Chairwoman Rosenworcel said would be ready in “months” instead took much longer to develop.

Then, the Biden-Harris Administration saddled the BEAD program with regulations unrelated to broadband to appease left-wing interest groups.

These included technology preferences, burdensome labor rules, and climate change requirements, to name a few.

Worse, the Biden Administration flagrantly ignored the law by forcing states to regulate broadband rates before NTIA would approve their proposals, even though the law explicitly prohibits rate regulation.

These actions did nothing to deploy broadband but instead created confusion while making the program less attractive to providers and deployment more expensive.

Energy and Commerce Committee Republicans are committed to fixing these blunders so that every American has access to broadband as quickly as possible.

That's why today, I—along with many Republicans on this Committee—introduced the SPEED for BEAD Act.

This bill would eliminate the burdensome Biden regulations so that we can get money out the door and shovels into the ground as soon as possible.

Specifically, this bill would eliminate the unnecessary and expensive regulations NTIA imposed, further clarify that rate regulation by NTIA or any other entity is prohibited, ensure that the program is run on a

technology-neutral basis, and more efficiently use tax dollars by ensuring that awards to providers are cost effective and that funds are only used for deployment.

These changes to the BEAD program can be implemented quickly, provide certainty to the states, and not hinder the progress that states have already made.

And I'm excited to hear that Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, just a few minutes ago, announced that he's launching a review of the BEAD program to cut red tape, eliminate waste, and make sure Americans get connected faster. I'm thrilled to have him join me in this effort.

Permitting Reform

Reforming BEAD is one important step to ensuring every American has broadband, but it is not enough. We also need to reform the permitting process for broadband projects. If we do not reform this process, all of

this money will get tied up in burdensome permitting reviews resulting in more unnecessary delays.

For the past three Congresses, Energy and Commerce Republicans have introduced legislation to streamline the broadband permitting process.

We have proposed codifying existing shot clocks to provide predictability in state and local permit reviews, exempting previously disturbed lands from duplicative and burdensome environmental and historic preservation reviews, and instilling transparency and urgency in permitting on federal lands.

Some of these bills had bipartisan support and passed the House last Congress.

Unfortunately, Democrats refused to work with us on the most meaningful reforms, which were included in Representative Carter's American Broadband Deployment Act.

I hope this new Congress and the urgency of this moment will inspire bipartisan cooperation on this effort. We must do everything we can to remove these unnecessary barriers to deployment.

Conclusion

Unserved Americans have waited too long for the promise of connectivity.

But now is the moment to close the digital divide once and for all.

Today's hearing is an opportunity to hear from stakeholders about how to address the challenges that could stop that from happening. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

I now yield five minutes to my colleague, Ranking Member Doris Matsui, for her opening statement.