

**Opening Statement for Chairman Richard Hudson
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Permitting Markup
November 18, 2025**

Good morning, and welcome to today's subcommittee markup of legislation to streamline broadband permitting. We are considering 28 bills that reduce or eliminate barriers to broadband deployment so we can finally close the digital divide.

For years, this subcommittee has discussed the importance of ensuring every American has access to reliable, high-speed broadband. Work, education, our health care, and even check-ins with far away loved ones, require a broadband connection. Yet too many Americans still lack access to this essential service from the mountains of North Carolina to Fort Bragg's military base.

Reaching those final unserved and underserved Americans requires funding, but it also requires permitting reform. Too often, broadband deployment is prevented or delayed because of burdensome, opaque and expensive permitting processes that exist at every level of government—federal, state, and local. These unnecessary obstacles not only increase

costs for deployment, but they also delay progress for communities that have already waited far too long. We need to address these challenges if we hope to close the digital divide once and for all.

The legislation we are marking up today does just that. First, we streamline the state and local permitting process by implementing clear timelines, or “shot clocks,” on application reviews and capping excessive fees. Next, we exempt certain projects—mostly those on previously disturbed lands—from having to perform cumbersome and duplicative environmental and historic preservation reviews. Finally, we reduce barriers to deployment on federal lands and increase coordination among different federal agencies. Together, these reforms will add much-needed certainty, predictability, and accountability to the broadband permitting process and help expedite deployment.

Many of these ideas are not new. In fact, some have already been enacted by the Federal Communications Commission. Under then-Chairman Ajit Pai, the FCC reformed state and local permitting by implementing shot clocks on reviews, capping fees, and removing other barriers to deployment. These reforms accelerated the rollout of 5G

infrastructure and showed how streamlining this process can make a real difference. Congress needs to codify and build on these reforms so they last.

We are on the verge of closing the digital divide and need to act now. After four years of delays caused by the Biden-Harris Administration, deployment will soon begin through the \$42.45 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (or BEAD) program. But for this program to succeed, permitting reform is essential. Otherwise, all this money will be tied up further in unnecessary reviews and bureaucratic delays. We cannot let the millions of unserved and underserved Americans continue waiting for the connectivity they need simply because we failed to modernize outdated rules.

Six of the bills we are marking up today are bipartisan. I'm pleased we have found common ground on these reforms and hope we can continue working together to make the remaining bills bipartisan as well. Closing the digital divide has always been a shared goal of this subcommittee, regardless of which party holds the gavel. We should not

allow red tape and outdated bureaucracy stand between Americans and the connectivity they need to work, learn, innovate, and thrive.

I want to thank my colleagues for their continued commitment to this issue and for their work developing these proposals. I look forward to moving these bills through committee and onto the floor so we can deliver results for the American people.

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