

July 24, 2023

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Grijalva:

On behalf of WTA – Advocates for Rural Broadband, I am writing in support of H.R. 4141, legislation that provides measured and reasonable streamlining of the permitting process for broadband infrastructure projects on federal lands and public rights-of-way to ensure broadband can be deployed quickly to unserved and underserved communities.

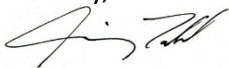
WTA represents more than 370 small broadband providers serving some of the most rural and hard to reach communities across the country. While there are many obstacles to bringing broadband to remote homes, farms, ranches, Tribal communities, anchor institutions, and businesses, obtaining permits in an expeditious manner is one that can delay vitally needed projects anywhere from 18 to 24 months or longer.

Bringing broadband to every serviceable location in the U.S. is a bipartisan goal. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act includes historic levels of funding for broadband, and the Biden Administration has a plan to connect every household, business, and anchor institution to a robust broadband connection within four to five years of those broadband funds being made available to service providers. Unfortunately, however, the time it currently takes to acquire permits to cross federal lands and access public rights-of-way puts this goal in jeopardy.

It makes no sense to subject broadband providers to unnecessary and duplicative National Environmental Protection Act and National Historic Preservation Act reviews. H.R. 4141 provides a common-sense solution by exempting broadband projects from further reviews when permits for use of federal land and rights-of-way have already been granted for utilities, roads and other infrastructure projects.

WTA urges the Committee to pass H.R. 4141 so that broadband service can be brought to every American in the most cost-effective manner as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Todd
President