



N A R U C
National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners

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Contact: Regina L. Davis, 202-988-9382, rdavis@naruc.org

NARUC Commends Bipartisan Farm Bill Aimed at Closing Broadband Gaps

Recommends Appointing State Regulators to Task Force

WASHINGTON—The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners issued the following statement applauding the bipartisan efforts of the Farm Bill Committee and Congress to pass legislation that will improve broadband Internet access in agricultural communities.

The Precision Agriculture Connectivity Act of 2018, approved by the House and Senate, will require the Federal Communications Commission to establish a task force for “identifying current gaps in the availability of broadband Internet access service on agricultural land and recommend[ing] policies to expand its deployment.” NARUC passed a resolution in July 2018 that encouraged this action and also urged the FCC to appoint state regulators to the task force.

“This is an important piece of legislation, as it provides much-needed support for our country’s agricultural programs while also recognizing the importance of broadband technology in managing U.S. farmlands,” said NARUC President Nick Wagner of Iowa. “We know that there is a direct benefit in cost savings and productivity in precision agriculture through reliable broadband Internet service.”

Among the findings reported by Congress is that although there is increasing demand for broadband on agricultural lands, it “is not consistently available where needed for agricultural operations.” Therefore, an important component of the bill is the proposed 15-member task force, which will review the connectivity and technology needs associated with precision agriculture, along with identifying gaps and making recommendations for policies that will expand deployment.

“As we noted in our resolution this summer, NARUC utility commissioners are highly qualified to serve on the task force,” said Paul Kjellander of the Idaho Public Utilities Commission and chair of NARUC’s Committee on Telecommunications. “Our state regulators have a track record for advocating broadband Internet buildout and also possess the necessary experience working with telecommunications providers.”

A copy of the bill is available at bit.ly/2RTW2ZC. NARUC’s resolution, adopted by the board of directors July 18, 2018, at the Summer Policy Summit, is available at bit.ly/NARUCFarmBillResolution.

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