



N A R U C  
National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners

May 29, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

**RE: National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners' Support for Expedited Passage of the Bipartisan Rural Broadband Acceleration Act (H.R. 7022)**

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Yesterday, Representatives James Clyburn (D-SC) and Fred Upton (R-MI) introduced the Rural Broadband Acceleration Act (H.R. 7022), which reforms the procedures for the pending Federal Communications Commission's Phase I Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction slated for October 2020. That FCC auction will award \$16 billion over 10 years to fund broadband buildout in census blocks that are unserved by voice and broadband with download speeds of at least 25 Mbps.

This bill expedites the award of funds, the start of construction, and the onset of service for symmetrical gigabit service. It also mandates rapid improvement of existing coverage maps used to target funds for many FCC subsidy programs.

A significant percentage of the U.S. population is currently working or learning from home. As the country reopens, many are likely to continue remote operations. The need to expedite access to high-speed Internet service to underserved communities has never been more apparent. Aside from telework, it is evident some schools intend to start in August with only online classes. Telemedicine options are accelerating to allow patients access to medical services without the added risk of exposing medical personnel and patients to infections.

What once was a convenience is now a necessity.

Congress should not miss this opportunity to streamline deployment of broadband to un- and underserved areas, as well as expedite infrastructure spending that can boost the country's economic recovery.

Under the Act, in the RDOF auction, the FCC must accept with the short-form application an attendant long-form application for projects that would almost certainly win funding under current RDOF auction rules: projects proposing fiber-to-the-home symmetrical Gigabit-capable networks. The census blocks identified in those long-form applications will be removed from the RDOF auction, unless two or more Gigabit applicants seek funding for the same blocks. “Gigabit” bidders submitting a long form in a block with no competing Gigabit applicants will get that block at the reserve price.

The FCC is required to condition those awards on an accelerated construction timetable and initial service availability within one year. All other census blocks would remain in the auction and the rest of the RDOF Phase I auction would proceed on its current schedule.

The bill also supports additional funding to expedite improvement to the FCC’s flawed maps that serve as the basis for many funding decisions. It requires the FCC to devote the resources necessary to upgrade the coverage maps no later than October 1, 2020.

Whether the current health and economic crisis lasts a few months or a year, funding on long-term rural fiber networks will be money well spent.

This is the right thing to do and the right time to do it. Congress should act now.

The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) represents public service commissions in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. Territories charged with assuring affordable utility services at just and reasonable rates. As Congress intended, NARUC’s members play a key role in the Federal Communications Commission’s universal service programs. If you have any questions about NARUC’s support for HR 7022, please do not hesitate to contact NARUC’s General Counsel Brad Ramsay at [jramsay@naruc.org](mailto:jramsay@naruc.org) or 202.257.0568.

Sincerely,



Brandon Presley  
NARUC President



Karen Charles Peterson  
Chair, NARUC Committee on Telecommunications