



N A R U C
National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners

June 2, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
United States of America
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

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

Dear President Trump:

Last Thursday, 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.

We hope you can spur Congress to ensure that the country does 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. We hope you can press Congress to act on H.R. 7022 quickly.

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. 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 have your staff contact NARUC's General Counsel Brad Ramsay at jramsay@naruc.org or 202.257.0568. We can make ourselves available to you or your staff at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Brandon Presley
NARUC President



Karen Charles Peterson
Chair, NARUC Committee on Telecommunications