

The Broadband Reform and Investment to Drive Growth in the Economy (BRIDGE) Act of 2021

Senator Michael Bennet, Senator Angus King, Senator Rob Portman

The pandemic has underscored the vital importance of high-speed broadband to modern American life. High-speed broadband is essential for Americans to telework, learn remotely, access telemedicine, and connect with friends and family. Yet millions of our fellow citizens still lack access – disproportionately from our rural areas, low-income neighborhoods, and communities of color. Even when communities have access, many are stuck with slow speeds, high costs, and few choices.

Over the past several decades, Washington has spent tens of billions of taxpayer dollars to deploy outdated networks that fail to meet many communities' needs and deprive Americans of the opportunity to fully participate in our modern economy. At the same time, millions of Americans have been priced out of the high-speed broadband entirely. It is well past time to bridge America's digital divide and build a 21st century broadband infrastructure that will meet our country's needs not only today, but for years to come.

The bipartisan BRIDGE Act:

- **Provides \$40 billion to States, Tribal Governments, D.C., and U.S. Territories** in Broadband Access Fund to connect Americans to affordable, high-speed broadband.
- **Prioritizes unserved, underserved, and high-cost areas** with investments in “future proof” networks that will meet the long-term needs of communities while supporting efforts to promote broadband affordability, adoption, and digital inclusion.
- **Encourages gigabit-level internet** wherever possible while raising the minimum speeds for new broadband networks to at least 100/100 Mbps, with flexibility for areas where this is technologically or financially impracticable.
- **Emphasizes affordability and inclusion** by requiring new broadband networks to provide at least one low-cost option for low-income families.
- **Increases choice and competition** by empowering local and state decision-making, lifting bans against municipal broadband networks, and allowing more entities to compete for funding.