



September 4, 2018

Dear Conferees to the 2018 Farm Bill:

Congratulations on your success in passing the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 ("the Farm Bill"). The undersigned national associations represent broadband providers that have invested over \$1.6 trillion in capital over the last twenty years to bring broadband to millions of Americans, many of whom live in rural areas. We appreciate the high priority being given to rural broadband by the Administration and your respective committees in the current House and Senate Farm Bills. However, we remain concerned that language in the House Farm Bill lacks sufficient protection from the use of taxpayer money to overbuild existing broadband networks.

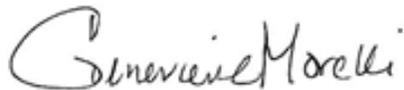
We respectfully urge conferees to adopt the specific provisions in the Senate Farm Bill that better target broadband support to unserved areas and limit overbuilding, including overbuilding in places where broadband providers have accepted federal funds to support broadband connections, such as Universal Service/Connect America support aimed at promoting and sustaining broadband deployment in high-cost rural areas.

The Senate Farm Bill, which makes an area eligible to receive RUS funds if 90 percent of the area is unserved at speeds of 25/3, would better protect taxpayer money and direct that money to areas that need it most. Furthermore, the standard contained in the Senate Farm Bill is consistent with the standard adopted by Congress for the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 pilot broadband program that will be administered by RUS.

Private sector investment and various governmental programs play critical complementary roles in advancing and sustaining broadband in rural America. The primary goal of the Farm Bill and other RUS initiatives focused on financing networks should be to close the digital divide by bringing broadband to those Americans who lack that critical resource

today. These efforts should not be undercut by unnecessary and inefficient overbuilding in areas with broadband service or where providers are investing significant capital to deploy broadband in the near term. We look forward to working with you to address the challenges of connecting rural America with broadband while ensuring that all federal broadband programs are run efficiently and avoid the practice of funding duplicative networks.

Sincerely,



President
ITTA - the Voice of America's Broadband Providers



Michael K Powell
President & CEO
NCTA – The Internet & Television Association



Shirley Bloomfield
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Jonathan Spalter
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