



The Voice of America's Broadband Providers

May 30, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Agriculture Committee
109 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Committee
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

Recently, Senators Daines and Leahy introduced legislation that would protect taxpayer money from being used to overbuild existing federally supported broadband networks. We believe that the Daines/Leahy legislation is not only good policy, but an opportunity to guard taxpayer money from waste, fraud, and abuse that would do more harm than good in promoting broadband in rural America.

Under your leadership, the Senate Committee on Agriculture has an opportunity to build on the work already done at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to promote broadband deployment to Americans living in rural areas who today cannot enjoy the social, economic, educational, and healthcare benefits of broadband. Using the \$600 million approved by Congress in the recently-enacted Omnibus Spending Bill, the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and its program participants and stakeholders can develop and implement a strategy to bring broadband to many of those unserved customers. Indeed, many ITTA members have proudly participated in RUS loan and grant programs over the years.

However, we write today to express our strong opposition to any rule that would allow RUS loan or grant monies to be used overbuild networks already supported by the federal Universal Service Fund (USF). We therefore urge the Senate Committee on Agriculture to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars by incorporating the Daines/Leahy legislation into the Farm Bill and by working to develop policies that supplement existing federal broadband programs – not policies that would squander taxpayer funds by allowing their use in areas already being supported by federal broadband programs.

Sincerely,

Genevieve Morelli
President

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture