



**Topline Messaging:** High-speed internet access means fully realizing the benefits of our 21st century economy, from starting and growing a business, to online education, telemedicine, and more. All Americans should be able to participate in the digital age, no matter where they live. Unfortunately, some communities are falling behind due to lack of broadband infrastructure. That disparity is called the digital divide, and the Energy and Commerce Committee is at the forefront of efforts to close it, from reducing barriers to broadband deployment and encouraging investment and innovation, to securing federal resources for the communities most underserved.

**Achievements So Far:** The [RAY BAUM'S Act](#), signed into law in March 2018, included a number of provisions to support broadband infrastructure deployment and provide funding targeted to currently unserved or underserved communities. E&C has also worked closely with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to boost critical programs.

- **REDUCING BARRIERS TO DEPLOYMENT:** As part of RAY BAUM'S Act, legislation was signed into law to update the rules for broadband deployment on federal property (H.R. 4795, the Communications Facilities Deployment on Federal Property Act), expedite decisions made by federal agencies on broadband deployment applications (H.R. 4847, the Broadband Deployment Streamlining Act), and allow broadband conduits to be built along with federal highway infrastructure (H.R. 4800, the Broadband Conduit Deployment Act). We also modernized existing federal databases that keep track of federal property to support communications infrastructure with H.R. 4798, the Inventory of Assets for Communications Facilities Act, and H.R. 4839, the Broadband Infrastructure Inventory Act.
- **IMPROVING BROADBAND MAPPING & DATA:** RAY BAUM'S Act includes provisions to more accurately measure broadband and mobile coverage, helping pinpoint the communities that need federal resources most. **\$7.5 million** was provided to support the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) broadband mapping coordination efforts. H.R. 1546, the Rural Wireless Act, improves the FCC's ability to measure mobile service coverage in rural areas.
- **SUPPORTING INNOVATION & 5G:** 5G means faster, more reliable movement of wireless data, which in turn will power innovations of the future like telemedicine, smart home devices, and self-driving cars. Spectrum is the lifeblood of wireless broadband, and RAY BAUM'S Act includes provisions to support the expansion and efficient use of commercial spectrum (H.R. 4109, the Spectrum Auction Deposits Act and H.R. 1814, the Rural Spectrum Accessibility Act.) E&C also worked with the FCC to boost funding for the Rural Health Care Program by \$171 million a year, helping more patients in rural communities access telemedicine.
- **SECURING CRITICAL RESOURCES:** Encouraging private investment is the best way to expand broadband deployment and innovation. But in some communities where it doesn't make business sense for companies to enter the market, federal resources can help close the digital divide. That's why Congress provided \$690 million to support the expansion of broadband infrastructure, including new loan and grant programs.

**What's Next:** There's even more we can and should do to support broadband deployment across the country. E&C is working to advance further legislative initiatives to address the digital divide.

- **H.R. 3994, the ACCESS Broadband Act** would establish an office of Internet Connectivity and Growth at NTIA to coordinate and track federal funding for broadband across all agencies. This office would streamline the process of applying for federal funding for projects that expand broadband access.
- **H.R. 4881, the Precision Agriculture Connectivity Act** would require the FCC, in cooperation with USDA, to form a task force to evaluate the best ways to meet the broadband needs of precision agriculture in the United States.
- **NTIA Reauthorization Discussion Draft**, would reauthorize NTIA at a funding level of \$50.8 million for each fiscal year starting in 2019 through 2021. The discussion draft, among other provisions, reasserts NTIA's authority over broadband mapping, as well as coordinating funds across federal programs.