



EXPANDING RELIABLE INTERNET ACCESS ACROSS SOUTH DAKOTA

Multiple Thune-led legislative efforts are helping to bridge the digital divide

As the former chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the current ranking member of the Senate Subcommittee on Communications, Media, and Broadband, Sen. Thune has worked to advance communications services to rural areas, and he remains committed to advancing smart federal policy to keep South Dakota at the forefront of new cutting-edge technology.

Highlights of Sen. Thune's Efforts to Expand Rural Broadband in South Dakota:

- Sen. Thune led multiple legislative efforts and held several hearings to advance rural broadband services. In 2019, he [led](#) a panel to discuss the need for broadband connectivity. It featured testimony from representatives of two South Dakota telecommunication companies, Justin Forde from Midcontinent Communications and Denny Law from Golden West Telecommunications. Later that year, he [led](#) a hearing in Sioux Falls to discuss the role broadband plays in more rural areas. That hearing included a variety of perspectives on this issue, including those from FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr and representatives from Dakota State University, South Dakota State University, Avera eCARE, SDN Communications, and VIKOR Teleconstruction. During these hearings, and through multiple letters to the agencies providing broadband funding, he has pushed to ensure broadband funding goes to truly unserved areas.
- Telecommunications providers in states like South Dakota rely on the FCC's High-Cost Fund to buildout broadband to rural areas. In 2018, at Sen. Thune's urging, the FCC adopted an order to enable the continued deployment of broadband by ensuring predictable and sufficient support to the High-Cost Fund.
- Sen. Thune's [Telecommunications Skilled Workforce Act](#), which became law as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58) in 2021, will help address the shortage of trained workers that are necessary to fill next-generation jobs in the telecommunications industry in communities in South Dakota and throughout the country.
- Introduced the [Rural Connectivity Advancement Program Act](#) and the [Connect Unserved Americans Act](#) to expand broadband access.

Highlights of Sen. Thune's Work to Advance 5G Technology:

- Sen. Thune's [MOBILE NOW Act](#) (S.19), which became law as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141) helped pave the way for the development of next-generation gigabit wireless broadband services, including 5G, by ensuring more spectrum is identified for private sector use and by reducing the red tape associated with building broadband networks.
- 5G technology uses small antennas called "small cells" that can often be installed on existing infrastructure. Sen. Thune's [STREAMLINE Small Cell Deployment Act](#) would set reasonable standards for public review of infrastructure siting while recognizing the unique challenges for small municipalities.
- Sen. Thune [pushed](#) the FCC to make more mid-band spectrum available for 5G. The FCC, under the Trump administration, adopted a proposal that followed the principles of the [5G Spectrum Act](#), legislation he co-authored to ensure wireless carriers have the spectrum that is necessary to deploy 5G across all parts of the country, including Sioux Falls and other areas in South Dakota.