

DIGITAL DIVIDE — Broadband Deployment, Adoption, and Affordability

Access to high-quality internet is a foundational issue. Regrettably, access to an affordable, reliable broadband connection eludes billions of people worldwide and millions in the U.S. This problem disproportionately affects low-income people and people of color. COVID-19—also much more likely to affect people of color—has made the problem worse. The new FCC should undertake the following:

Immediately

- Carry out the Emergency Broadband Benefit program and ensure the benefit is easy to access
- Return Lifeline minimum standards to pre-December 1, 2020, benchmarks at least until the Media Bureau completes its State of the Lifeline Marketplace Report on June 30, 2021
- Close the open Lifeline proceeding initiated by FCC 19-111 (released on November 14, 2019)
- Push Congress to appropriate funding for better broadband data and continue to improve quantity and quality of broadband data under Broadband DATA Act
- Oppose internet shutdowns under 47 U.S.C. §606 and support the bipartisan Preventing Unwarranted Communications Shutdowns Act from Reps. Eshoo and Griffith

Short-term (60 days)

- Begin building an office of civil rights, reporting directly to the Commission, and help establish meaningful consultations with civil rights, human rights, and Indigenous organizations
- Initiate rulemaking to determine how to collect broadband pricing data
- Allow students to access E-Rate services at home as the new COVID “classroom”
- Work with USAC to improve visibility and participation rate in Lifeline
- Initiate rulemaking on feasibility of expanding Universal Service Fund base
- Work with states and Congress to help create and fund digital literacy programs

Medium-term (180 days)

- Initiate rulemaking to change definition of advanced telecom capability to at least 100/50
- Make progress toward abolishing digital redlining

CONSUMER PROTECTION

The FCC plays a crucial role in protecting Americans against the harmful behaviors of telecom (including broadband) providers. It needs to ensure that it has authority to carry out that central mission and continues being a vigilant cop-on-the-beat. The new FCC should undertake the following:

Immediately

- Disavow the Section 230 Office of General Counsel opinion, close any Section 230 proceeding, and issue a ruling that the FCC will take no action under Section 230
- Rescind the Restoring Internet Freedom Order and move to reinstate the 2015 Open Internet Order

Short-term (60 days)

- Advocate in favor of removing barriers to community broadband at the state level

Medium-term (180 days)

- Revisit and update the January 2017 zero rating report, expand it to cover new data caps like Comcast's new 1.2 TB/month limit on fixed plans

For more information, please contact:

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