



REPUBLICAN LEADER GLENN 'GT' THOMPSON

# **BROADBAND FOR RURAL AMERICA ACT**

**SECTION-BY-SECTION**

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## **SECTION 2 | STREAMLINING DUPLICATIVE BROADBAND AUTHORITIES**

Section 2 codifies the ReConnect program and merges it with USDA's existing retail rural broadband program. It preserves the priorities passed in the 2018 Farm Bill, including:

- Establishing 25/3 Mbps connections as the threshold for minimum broadband service;
- Imposing rigorous new buildout requirements to ensure that broadband networks financed through USDA meet the long-term needs of rural residents;
- Targeting limited resources so assistance is focused on the most rural and least-connected residents, which are often the most expensive to connect;
- Promoting borrower accountability and protecting taxpayers with new tools to ensure promised services are delivered to rural communities;
- Requiring USDA to establish a loan guarantee program serving rural communities of up to 50,000 people.

Section 2 provides a one-year transition to the newly codified ReConnect program. It increases the authorization of ReConnect to \$3.5 billion starting in FY2022.

## **SECTION 3 | EXPANDING MIDDLE-MILE INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL AMERICA**

Section 3 increases the authorization of the Middle Mile Broadband Program to \$150 million.

Middle mile broadband networks are regional Internet infrastructure which connect local broadband networks to the Internet backbone. These often-overlooked components of the Internet are essential to providing quality broadband service in rural areas.

## **SECTION 4 | BROADBAND TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION**

Section 4 increases the authorization of the Innovative Broadband Advancement Program to \$50 million.

The Innovative Broadband Advancement Program provides USDA with flexible authority to finance novel, innovative broadband projects. The program will allow the Department to explore new ways to provide rural connectivity which can be replicated across unserved communities.

## **SECTION 5 | BROADBAND PROGRAM OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Section 5 increases funding for program accountability and administration to ensure USDA has the resources it needs to process applications quickly, prevent overbuilding, and hold applicants accountable to their promises.

## **SECTION 6 | AMENDMENTS TO FEDERAL BROADBAND PROGRAM COORDINATION REQUIREMENTS**

Section 6 updates the coordination framework for USDA, The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the National Telecommunications Infrastructure Administration (NTIA).

Updates reflect:

- The passage of the Broadband DATA Act, which shifted federal broadband mapping efforts to the FCC;
- The new broadband grant programs at NTIA;
- Updated information sharing requirements to reduce program overlap and duplication of services.