

## **New GAO Watchdog Report Underscores Carr’s Concerns About the Absence of a National Strategy Coordinating Billions in Broadband Infrastructure Spending**

WASHINGTON, DC, June 10, 2022—Last week, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO)—known as the “investigative arm of Congress”—issued a concerning [report](#) regarding the billions of dollars that the federal government is spending on the important work of bridging the digital divide. The GAO determined that “U.S. broadband efforts are not guided by a national strategy” and that “[f]ederal broadband efforts are fragmented and overlapping, with more than 100 programs administered by 15 agencies,” risking overbuilding as well as wasteful duplication. GAO highlighted that “most of the agency officials” they interviewed agreed that a new national strategy would be helpful. Yet the GAO also noted that “[t]he Executive Office of the President has not decided if a national strategy is needed.”

Commissioner Carr issued the following response:

“For over a year, I have been sounding the alarm on the troubling lack of oversight and coordination when it comes to the federal government’s expenditure of hundreds of billions of dollars that Congress appropriated for ending the digital divide. I have written letters to federal agencies charged with administering those funds to seek assurances that taxpayer dollars are not wasted, and in several cases those letters received no response at all. I have testified about the worrying lack of coordination across federal agencies and their respective programs. I have spoken out about the absence of adequate tracking, measurement, and accountability standards. And I have noted that the Administration’s approach to spending these broadband dollars is poised to leave rural communities and unconnected Americans behind.

“This troubling new GAO watchdog report only underscores those concerns. The GAO finds that the Administration lacks a national strategy to guide the federal government’s broadband efforts, which the GAO determined are now fragmented over 133 different programs and spread across 15 separate agencies.

“The Administration’s failure to put appropriate protections in place is troubling given both the volume of taxpayer dollars at issue and the importance of delivering on the shared goal of connecting all Americans. Indeed, it appears that the Administration has turned the spigot on full blast and then walked away from the hose. As a result, taxpayers are about to get soaked.

“Spending hundreds of billions of dollars in an uncoordinated way only adds to the inflationary pressures that are already hitting Americans in their pocketbooks. Indeed, the failure to put a national strategy in place hampers efforts to build out broadband infrastructure at a point in time when telecom crews are already facing serious headwinds. Just last week, I participated in a broadband roundtable in South Dakota where providers stated that their costs to construct Internet infrastructure are up nearly 30% in light of inflation, rising fuel costs, supply chain challenges, and workforce shortages.

“The Administration should put a national strategy in place to ensure that the federal government delivers on this opportunity to end the digital divide.”

Carr previously expressed concerns about the concerning lack of a coordinated broadband plan, including [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

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