

GREG PENCE
6TH DISTRICT, INDIANA

ENERGY AND
COMMERCE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSUMER
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June 29th, 2022

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The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel,

Pursuant to the Broadband Interagency Coordination Act, enacted as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L.116-260), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) were required to enter into an interagency agreement to track the distribution of broadband funds across federal programs. Within one year, the FCC was required to initiate a public comment period on the effectiveness of the interagency agreement in facilitating efficient use of funds for broadband deployment by June 24th, 2022.¹

This law, which I sponsored in the 116th Congress, is a critical tool to improve our ability to bring broadband service to the most unserved and underserved communities in rural Indiana and across the country. I encourage the FCC to take these statutory requirements seriously and fulfill the intent of Congress to improve collaboration of the entities tasked with closing the digital divide for Hoosiers and all Americans.

By signing the Broadband Interagency Coordination Act into law, Congress rightly recognized an ongoing problem of inefficient disbursement of finite federal resources for rural broadband service. Across Southeast Indiana, rural communities are at a disadvantage because of little to no access to high-speed broadband. That means access to telehealth appointments, online education opportunities, remote work, and social connections with family and friends remain out of reach. While Congress and the FCC have long taken steps to close the digital divide, a lack of federal coordination is beginning to lead to the inefficient overbuilding of existing programs like the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund.

Unfortunately, funding made available through the American Rescue Plan Act may only make matters worse. Instead of coordinating funding through an established process with expert agencies, it is my understanding that the Department of Education and Department of Treasury

¹ Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, Public Law 116-260, 134 Stat. 3215

may advance efforts to overbuild existing networks and recklessly distribute funding with minimal coordination or oversight. These issues may be further compounded as the NTIA begins the process of distributing \$42.5 billion through the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BDAD) Program. It is imperative that these agencies work together in close coordination and uphold the interagency agreement to enforce good governance principles for the best use of taxpayer resources.

The FCC should take advantage of this public comment period to seriously consider opportunities to improve interagency efforts to bring unconnected Hoosiers into the modern economy. Thank you for your attention to this important matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Greg Pence". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Greg Pence
Member of Congress

CC:

Commissioner Brendan Carr
Commissioner Geoffrey Starks
Commissioner Nathan Simington