

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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December 22, 2022

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

The Honorable Alan Davidson  
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information  
National Telecommunications and Information Administration  
1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Chairwoman Rosenworcel and Assistant Secretary Davidson:

We write to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to extend the deadline to submit location and availability challenges to the FCC's broadband maps by at least 60 days, or until March 14, 2023. An extension would improve the accuracy of the maps by allowing sufficient time for state and local governments, Tribal nations, and consumers to provide input and challenge the maps. This will ensure that we are directing broadband funding to the places that need it most.

Congress assigned the FCC and NTIA separate—but related—tasks to improve broadband deployment in the United States. Specifically, Congress tasked the FCC with improving its broadband maps to better identify served and unserved areas, and NTIA with distributing the historic amount of broadband funding made available in the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to the correct areas using those broadband maps. As a result, it is absolutely critical that states, tribes, localities, and stakeholders have the necessary time to help ensure that the FCC's final maps accurately reflect unserved and underserved areas.

The significant flaws in the draft maps recently released by the FCC further underline the need for a robust challenge process. Researchers in Washington State, for example, found that 60 percent of residences and businesses in a town on Tribal lands were missing entirely from the new map.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, in Stevens County, Washington, the draft maps indicate 100 percent (25/3 Mbps) broadband availability, but Microsoft's data show that under 20 percent of the population are actually using the internet at broadband speeds.<sup>2</sup> Mississippi's state broadband office found "a 'tremendous amount' of addresses missing in high-growth areas of the state."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kery Murakami, "Fears Grow Over Plan to Distribute Billions in Broadband Dollar," Route Fifty, Dec. 8, 2022, <https://www.route-fifty.com/infrastructure/2022/12/fears-grow-over-plan-distribute-billions-broadband-dollars/380652/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Microsoft Digital Equity Dashboard: 'Stevens County, Washington'," Microsoft (last accessed Dec. 21, 2022), <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjozM2JmM2QxZjEtYWEzZi00MDI5LTlhZDMtODMzMjhhkZTY2Y2Q2IiwidCI6ImMxMzZlZWwLWZlOTItNDVIMC1iZWFiLTQ2OTg0OTczZTIzMiIsImMiOjF9>.

<sup>3</sup> Kavish Harjai, States Contend with Short Timeline to Correct Broadband Map, ABC News (Dec. 21, 2022), <https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/states-contend-short-timeline-correct-broadband-map-95661303>.

In New Mexico, the entire Pueblo of Cochiti and the town of Shiprock are missing from the broadband serviceable location fabric, and in total, the New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion estimates over 37,000 locations are missing.<sup>4</sup> In Nebraska, several rural villages in need of broadband connectivity, such as Arthur, show no serviceable locations for nearly the entire town.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the FCC's draft maps show that Grainger County, Tennessee, just northeast of Knoxville, is fully served by a combination of fixed and mobile broadband.<sup>6</sup> Yet Microsoft's mapping tool indicates that, in different areas of the county, between 0.6 percent and 95.2 percent of the population lacks access to broadband.<sup>7</sup> Based on this initial review, it is clear that states and local communities need more time to review and analyze the maps and submit challenges to the data than the six weeks (which cover the busy holiday season) currently provided.

Without accurate broadband maps, unconnected Americans will be stuck with the status quo regardless of how much funding Congress provides, or how quickly NTIA distributes that funding. That is why we urge the FCC and NTIA to work together to extend the deadline to submit location and availability challenges to the FCC's broadband maps by at least 60 days. Extending the challenge deadline is critical to ensuring that communities across our nation receive their fair share of funding to close the digital divide.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



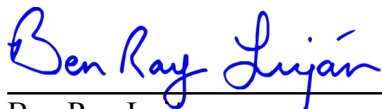
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Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



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Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senator



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Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator



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Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator

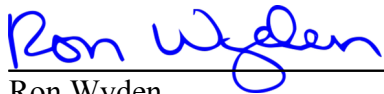
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<sup>4</sup> David McGarry, "Senators and Witnesses Criticize Accuracy of FCC's New Map," Broadband Breakfast, Dec. 13, 2022, <https://broadbandbreakfast.com/2022/12/senators-and-witnesses-criticize-accuracy-of-fccs-new-map/>.

<sup>5</sup> "FCC National Broadband Map: 'Nebraska'," Federal Communications Commission (last accessed Dec. 21, 2022), [https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/area-summary/fixed?geoid=31&type=state&zoom=6.54&vlon=-99.680902&vlat=41.518219&br=r&speed=25\\_3&tech=1\\_2\\_3\\_4\\_5\\_6\\_7\\_8](https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/area-summary/fixed?geoid=31&type=state&zoom=6.54&vlon=-99.680902&vlat=41.518219&br=r&speed=25_3&tech=1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8).

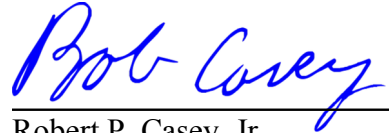
<sup>6</sup> "FCC National Broadband Map: 'Grainger County, TN'," Federal Communications Commission (last accessed Dec. 21, 2022), [https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/area-summary/fixed?geoid=47057&type=county&zoom=10.09&vlon=-83.493998&vlat=36.250822&br=r&speed=25\\_3&tech=1\\_2\\_3\\_4\\_5\\_6\\_7\\_8](https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/area-summary/fixed?geoid=47057&type=county&zoom=10.09&vlon=-83.493998&vlat=36.250822&br=r&speed=25_3&tech=1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8).

<sup>7</sup> "Microsoft Digital Equity Dashboard: 'Grainger County, TN'," Microsoft (last accessed Dec. 21, 2022), <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiM2JmM2QxZjEtYWEzZi00MDI5LThlZDMtODMzZjE0MjY2Y2Q2IiwidCI6ImMxMzZlZWwLWZlOTItNDVIMC1iZWVILTQ2OTg0OTczZTIzMiIsImMiOjF9>.



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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



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Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



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Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



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Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



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Deb Fischer  
United States Senator



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John Hickenlooper  
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