

From Jeff Sobotka, Arizona State Broadband Manager

Here is a summary of the Federal Broadband Stimulus. Still lots of rules and regulations to come but this should give you an idea of where the federal dollars are targeted.

Summary of \$7 billion for Broadband COVID-19 relief:

\$1.9 Billion to Fund the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) "Rip-and-Replace" Communications Security Program

-) The broadband package fully funds the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act (Public Law 116-124), which established FCC reimbursement program to remove unsecure communications equipment from the nation's communications networks. It also expands eligibility for the rip-and-replace reimbursement program to communications providers with 10 million subscribers or less, but still prioritizes reimbursement for providers with \$2 million subscribers or less.

\$285 Million for Connecting Minority Communities

-) The package adopts S. 4422, the Connecting Minority Communities Act, which establishes an Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and appropriates \$285 million to support historically black colleges and universities, tribal colleges and universities, and minority-serving education institutions, including when they partner with minority-owned businesses, to expand broadband capacity and use at the school and in the surrounding community, including by assisting students afford broadband service.

\$250 Million for Additional FCC Support for Telehealth

-) The package appropriates an additional \$250 million to the FCC for its COVID-19 Telehealth Program authorized under the CARES Act (Public Law 116-136). It also puts in place new transparency obligations for the program surrounding the FCC's review of applications, and directs the Commission to ensure, to the extent feasible, that all states benefit from the program.

\$3.2 Billion for an Emergency Broadband Benefit for Low-Income Americans

-) The bill establishes a temporary, emergency broadband benefit program at the FCC to help low-income Americans, including those economically-challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic, get connected or remain connected to broadband. The program will supply a \$50 monthly discount to qualifying households (which increases to \$75 monthly for those living on tribal lands) to help them afford broadband service, and a subsidy for a low-cost device such as a computer or tablet.

\$1 Billion for a Dedicated Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grant Program

-) The bill establishes a \$1 billion grant program at NTIA to support broadband connectivity on tribal lands throughout the country. The grants would be directed to tribal governments to be used not only for broadband deployment on tribal lands, but also telehealth, distance learning, broadband affordability, and digital inclusion.

\$300 Million to Promote Broadband Expansion to Unserved Americans

-) The bill establishes a \$300 million broadband deployment grant program at NTIA to support broadband infrastructure deployment to areas lacking broadband, especially rural areas. The grants would be issued to qualifying partnerships between state and local governments and fixed broadband providers. Priority for grants would be given to networks that would reach the most unserved Americans.

\$65 Million for Better Broadband Maps

-) The package fully funds the FCC's development of new, more accurate, and more granular broadband availability maps as directed by Congress in the Broadband DATA Act, Public Law 116-130. These maps will help the Federal government better target support for broadband deployment.

Summary of additional provisions in omnibus:

S. 1294, Broadband Interagency Coordination Act

-) The Broadband Interagency Coordination Act will require the FCC, NTIA, and U.S. Department of Agriculture to enter into an interagency agreement to coordinate the distribution of federal funds for broadband programs, prevent duplication of support, and ensure stewardship of taxpayer dollars.
-) The agreement is required to cover, among other things, the exchange of information about project areas funded under the programs and the confidentiality of the information.
-) The FCC is required to publish and collect public comments about the agreement, including regarding its efficacy and suggested modifications.

H.R. 451, Don't Break Up the T-Band Act of 2020

-) The Don't Break Up the T-Band Act of 2020 repeals the requirement for the FCC to reallocate and auction the 470 to 512 megahertz (MHz) band, commonly referred to as the T-Band. In certain urban areas, the T-Band is utilized by public-safety entities.
-) The legislation will also direct the FCC to implement rules to clarify acceptable expenditures on which 9-1-1 fees can be spent, and will create a strike force to consider how the federal government can end 9-1-1 fee diversion. This clarification is essential to ensuring states and localities have the resources necessary to staff 9-1-1 calling centers, respond to emergencies, and upgrade to next-generation communications systems.

H.R. 1328, Advancing Critical Connectivity Expands Service, Small Business Resources, Opportunities, Access, and Data Based on Assessed Need and Demand (ACCESS BROADBAND) Act

-) The ACCESS BROADBAND Act will establish the Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth (Office) at the NTIA. This Office will be tasked with performing certain responsibilities related to broadband access, adoption, and deployment, such as performing public outreach to promote access and adoption of high-speed broadband service, and streamlining and standardizing the process for applying for federal broadband support.

-) The Office will also track federal broadband support funds and coordinate federal broadband support programs within the executive branch and with the FCC ensuring unserved Americans have access to connectivity and preventing duplication of broadband deployment programs.

S. 4803, Beat CHINA for 5G Act of 2020

-) The Beat CHINA for 5G Act of 2020 will direct the President, acting through the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information, to withdraw or modify federal spectrum assignments in the 3450 to 3550 MHz band, and will direct the FCC to begin a system of competitive bidding to permit non-federal, flexible-use services in such band no later than December 31, 2021.
-) This is intended to unleash critical mid-band spectrum for commercial use to enhance U.S. global leadership in 5G and next-generation technologies.