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## ***Broadband Connections for Rural Opportunities Program (B-Crop) Act***

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### **Endorsements**

American Library Association  
Center for Rural Strategies  
National Association of Development Organizations  
National Association of Towns and Townships  
National Center for Frontier Communities  
National Conference of State Legislatures  
National League of Cities  
NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association  
State Agriculture and Rural Leaders  
Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) Inc.  
WTA—Advocates for Rural Broadband

Today, a high-speed internet connection is as critical to economic opportunity and quality of life as water, sewer, and electricity. Yet, an alarming 34 million Americans are cut off from this essential service and the good-paying jobs and daily conveniences that it provides. Small towns and tribal lands are especially left behind, with over a third of rural Americans lacking access to broadband and 41 percent of tribal residents. In comparison to other developed countries around the world, the United States lags behind many when it comes to deployment, speed, and price.

Without access to quality, affordable broadband service, workers have fewer opportunities for good-paying jobs, farmers and business owners are isolated from new markets, our children are limited in the education options they can take advantage of, health care providers are unable to offer the best of medical services, and first responders are put more at risk in their protection of our communities.

To ensure all Americans have access to the opportunities of our digital economy, we must work to connect all communities to high-speed internet, which requires smart government policies that enable broadband providers to expand broadband availability. The *Broadband Connections for Rural Opportunities Program (B-CROP) Act* proposes such policies to target federal funds to rural and tribal areas in the highest of need to connect all Americans, regardless of where they live, work, or retire, to the technology necessary to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **What the B-CROP Act Does**

- Similar to the way the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Water and Environmental Program is structured with a grant/loan combination for funding projects, this legislation allows for grants of up to 50 percent of a project's cost, and up to 75 percent for remote, high-need areas, to be awarded in combination with the current loan funding available through USDA's Rural Utilities Service.
- By combining grants with loans, the bill helps enhance the economic feasibility of projects serving rural and tribal areas.
- Highest priority is given to projects that serve areas that are currently unserved by high-speed broadband.
- This program coordinates with the FCC's Universal Service High-Cost Support programs to complement those federal investments, responsibly spending taxpayer dollars.
- This legislation also increases the authorized funding for RUS' Broadband programs to \$50 million per fiscal year.

- This proposal provides adequate resources to private sector providers, including corporations, LLCs, cooperatives or mutual organizations, state or local government, and Indian tribes or tribal organizations to expand broadband access to unserved rural areas.
- Partnership projects are given special attention including initiatives that leverage matching funds and that work with anchor institutions like health centers, libraries, colleges, universities, and other educational entities.

Sincerely,

Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

Elise Stefanik  
Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

Hal Rogers  
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress