

Written Questions Submitted by Senator Ron Johnson to Honorable Michael O’Rielly

Question. You've talked about the need to improve the FCC's broadband mapping while also being mindful of the costs of any new data collection. In reviewing any new mapping proposal, should the FCC try to balance granularity and complexity with speed and cost? If yes, how can this balance be achieved?

Response. Yes, the flaws of the FCC’s current Form 477 mapping approach are well-known, and I have supported legislative efforts to improve the effectiveness and accuracy of our data. In determining the appropriate level of data granularity, the FCC must be mindful of the costs of and our mandate for producing more specific maps. The Chairman has circulated an item on improving the Commission’s Form 477 data for the August 2019 Open Meeting, and I look forward to examining the record in that proceeding to ensure that we achieve an appropriate balance.

Written Questions Submitted by Senator Todd Young to Honorable Michael O’Rielly

Question. Currently, millions of rural Americans lack access to fixed high-speed broadband, which in today’s economy is perceived as basic infrastructure. In the FCC’s 2019 *Broadband Deployment Report*, the FCC concluded that broadband is being deployed to all Americans, including rural Americans, in a timely fashion. The report also asserted that FCC policies are promoting investments and removing burdensome barriers.

With that said, according to a preliminary analysis, which was released on Monday by USTelecom, U.S. broadband provider investments increased by approximately \$3 billion to total roughly \$75 billion in 2018.

Given the ongoing growth in private investments, what are the FCC’s priorities moving forward to ensure U.S. broadband providers have the resources they need in the free market for continued investments in rural America? Additionally, how will the FCC continue to update its mapping to provide an accurate account of high-speed service?

Response. While there is no doubt that rapid and robust progress in broadband deployment continues, approximately nine million Americans still lack access to even 10/1 Mbps service, and connecting those households should be our foremost priority. In turn, I have urged the Commission to implement the Remote Areas Fund (RAF) auction, in some form or function, and I look forward to swift action on that front. Further, it is crucial that the Commission take steps to prevent USF-funded overbuilding. Unfortunately, insufficient guardrails in the Commission’s USF rules have led to E-Rate-funded overbuilds of CAF-funded networks. This has undermined the Commission’s own investments, and jeopardized broadband deployment in rural communities. The Commission must act to eliminate this perverse waste and ensure that USF support flows only to where it is truly needed.

As part of the Commission’s rural broadband efforts, it is furthermore essential that we fix our broken mapping process. As such, I look forward to reviewing the item scheduled for our August Open Meeting, which is focused on improving the Commission’s Form 477 data and achieving an appropriate level of granularity, while being mindful of costs and our statutory mandate.