

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 7, 2020

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
Office of the Majority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer
United States Senate
Office of the Minority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patrick J. Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby, and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As Congress completes the appropriations process for FY2021, we urge you to provide full funding for Public Law 116-124, the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act, and Public Law 116-130, the Broadband DATA Act.

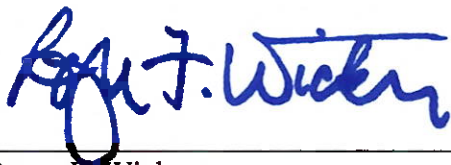
Closing the digital divide and winning the race to 5G are critical to America's economic prosperity and global leadership in technology. However, our ability to connect all Americans and provide access to next-generation technology will depend in large part on the security of our communications infrastructure. The Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act ("rip and replace") created a program to help small, rural telecommunications operators remove equipment posing a security threat to domestic networks and replace it with equipment from trusted providers. This is a national security imperative. Fully funding this program is essential to protecting the integrity of our communications infrastructure and the future viability of our digital economy at large.

In addition to safeguarding the security of the nation's communications systems, developing accurate broadband maps is also critically important. The United States faces a persistent digital divide, and closing this divide requires accurate maps that show where broadband is available and where it is not. Current maps overstate broadband availability, which prevents many underserved communities, particularly in rural areas, from receiving the funds needed to build or expand broadband networks to millions of unconnected Americans. Fully funding the Broadband DATA Act will ensure more accurate broadband maps and better stewardship over the millions of dollars the federal government awards each year to support broadband deployment. Without these maps, the government risks overbuilding existing networks, duplicating funding already provided, and leaving communities unserved.

Broadband is an essential asset in the modern world. As more aspects of life move online, Congress needs to ensure Americans have access to secure connectivity. Providing funding for rip and replace and broadband mapping will help achieve this goal.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to working with you to secure this funding.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker
Chairman
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science
& Transportation



John Barrasso
United States Senator



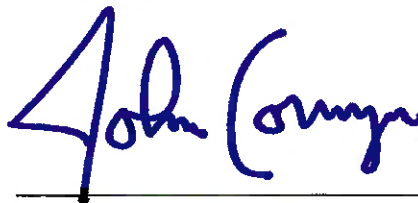
Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



Richard Burr
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Deb Fischer
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



David Perdue
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator



Pat Roberts
United States Senator



Tim Scott
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Todd Young
United States Senator