



2550 South Clark Street | Suite 960 | Arlington, VA 22202
202.872.0030 Phone | 202.872.1331 Fax
utc.org | networks.utc.org

June 1, 2020

The Honorable James E. Clyburn
Majority Whip
H-329, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Fred Upton
United States House of Representatives
2183 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Whip James E. Clyburn and Congressman Fred Upton:

The Utilities Technology Council (UTC) thanks House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn (D-SC-6th) and Congressman Fred Upton (R-MI-6th) for their tireless efforts to enact bipartisan policies that will help bring affordable and reliable broadband to unserved and underserved communities throughout the United States. H.R. 7022, the Rural Broadband Acceleration Act will begin to immediately address our nation's connectivity issues by directing the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to fund hundreds of high-speed rural broadband projects that are ready to deploy today. UTC looks forward to continuing working with both Congressmen on this bipartisan legislation, especially as UTC electric utility members of all ownership types are increasingly stepping up to close the digital divide in historically unserved communities. UTC has long supported utility broadband deployment efforts, as utilities are well suited to leverage their communications network infrastructure and knowledge to both facilitate and provide broadband services.

With zero taxpayer dollars, the Rural Broadband Acceleration Act will supplement existing rules that the FCC established for the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) – a critical auction that will help fund the buildout of broadband infrastructure in unserved communities. Specifically, this bill will create a process in which the FCC can expedite RDOF funds for gigabit tier broadband projects that are set to automatically receive funding under current RDOF rules. Many of these projects are being proposed by rural electric cooperatives, which are increasingly deploying fiber-to-the-home networks that support triple-play voice, video, and internet services at affordable prices. These broadband deployments have proven sustainable both in terms of Return on Investment and consumer adoption rates.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has once again shown the critical need for every U.S. home to have access to high-speed broadband services, as it is a lifeline to everything people need for their everyday lives. Broadband connectivity creates opportunities to work from home; it helps small businesses grow and thrive. It enables telemedicine possibilities, and it is essential for providing students with access to educational opportunities and materials. Simply put, it is a critical component of our 21st Century Economy. H.R. 7022, the Rural Broadband Acceleration Act will help to finally, and expeditiously, bring these benefits to thousands of people living in rural America today, and UTC applauds both Congressmen for their work on this bill.