



# NATIONAL GRANGE

1616 H ST. NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20006 | PHONE (202) 628-3507 | FAX (202) 347-1091

WWW.NATIONALGRANGE.ORG | INFO@NATIONALGRANGE.ORG

---

*American Values. Hometown Roots.*

---

To whom it may concern,

At the National Grange, our mission is to strengthen individuals, families, and communities through grassroots action, advocacy, education, service, and agricultural awareness. A critical component to our work is ensuring the economic well-being of our community members, which requires access to reliable, affordable, high-speed broadband. More than 14 million Americans across the country, including nearly 1 in 5 rural Americans, continue to lack access to high-speed broadband. Without broadband access, our farms, ranches, schools, health clinics, small businesses, families and other rural community members are unable to utilize the precision technology tools needed to compete and remain competitive in today's global economy.

While we are glad to see the broad bipartisan support for an infrastructure bill that includes expanding broadband access throughout our country – particularly within rural communities – it is critical that Congress consider solutions to address the impediments that currently stand in the way of successful broadband deployment. Only then can we ensure that both public and private funding for broadband infrastructure is maximized for actual and timely deployment, and that truly unserved Americans receive access to broadband.

The priority for any new broadband deployment must be to first connect the unserved — those communities without a broadband connection of 25/3 Mbps. Infrastructure legislation needs a firm and unwavering definition for “unserved areas” that is consistent with this priority, and funding needs to be directed to truly unserved areas first. Any legislative language that permits an end run around or weakening of the “unserved” definition and priority — e.g., by directing funding to projects that only have a small portion of truly unserved households — would lead to limited funding resources being diverted to areas that already have broadband. Diverting government resources this way directly undermines the goal of getting all Americans connected and needs to be avoided.

Placing a priority on unserved areas also means traversing longer distances to reach fewer people in rural areas. Rights-of-way and utility pole access are critically important for enabling rural connectivity across the nation. Right now, however, the process of adding new broadband infrastructure is complex, costly, time consuming, and inconsistent. This oftentimes creates needless obstacles and delays to bringing broadband to the communities that need it most.

The current infrastructure bill presents a significant, once-in-a-generation opportunity to bridge our nation's digital divide, but Congress may need to consider right-of-way and utility pole access reform that ensures timely access, fair cost sharing, and expedited resolution of disputes. Only then can we maximize the public and private dollars devoted to deploying rural broadband and ensure that all currently unserved households, small businesses, anchor institutions, and farms and ranches across our country are connected without delay.

We look forward to working with you to help to connect more Americans.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy E. Huber".

Betsy Huber  
National Grange President