

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 8, 2017

Chairman Michael Conaway  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Collin Peterson  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1305 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Conaway and Ranking Member Peterson,

Historically, the federal government has played a major role in the expansion of technological advances in communications. Whether it was electricity, radio, or the telephone, the federal government helped make these technologies ubiquitous throughout the country. Broadband is the next frontier. As was the case with new technology in the past, we are facing a major urban and rural divide. Eliminating this divide should be a priority as we write the next Farm Bill.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 2016 Broadband Progress Report stated that 39 percent of Americans living in rural areas (23.4 million people) lack access to fixed broadband which they classify as speeds of 25 Mbps/3 Mbps. Access is even worse on Tribal lands where 68 percent of the population does not have access to fast broadband.

We support increasing access to broadband in rural areas. Furthermore, we also recognize the importance of spending our money wisely and efficiently. Therefore, we hope that we can work together to find ways to increase the oversight responsibilities and authority for USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to ensure that broadband funding can be stretched to deliver the best broadband possible to the greatest number of people as possible.

Broadband is a necessity that rural communities need to survive. Access to broadband increases economic activity, produces jobs, helps small businesses grow, increases crop yields, and so much more. Individuals without broadband access face significant challenges to competing in a modern economy. As we draft the Farm Bill, we urge you to make increasing rural broadband access a priority.

Sincerely,



Michelle Lujan Grisham  
Member of Congress



Hal Rogers  
Member of Congress

  
Tom O'Halleran  
Member of Congress


  
Kristi Noem  
Member of Congress


  
Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

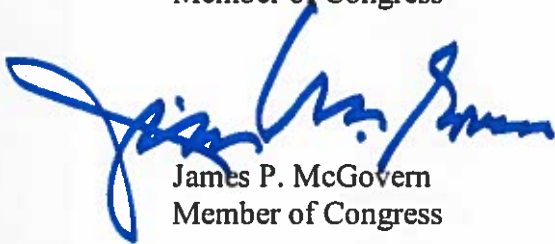
  
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Cheri Bustos  
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Marcia Fudge  
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Terri Sewell  
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Tim Walz  
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Tim Ryan  
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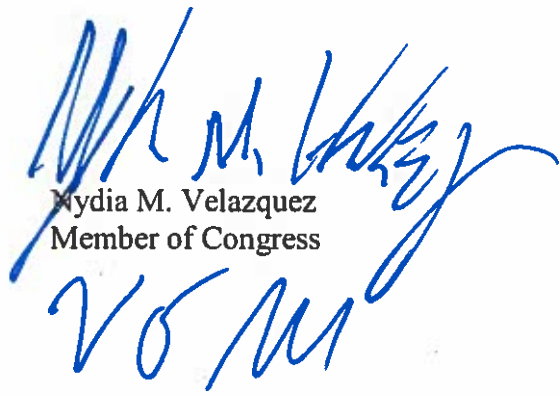
  
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Peter Welch  
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David Scott  
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Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velazquez  
Member of Congress



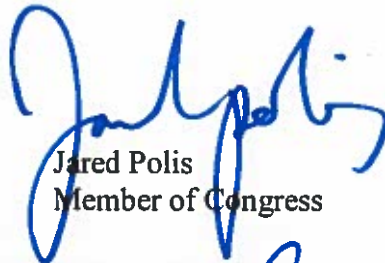
Jacky Rosen  
Member of Congress



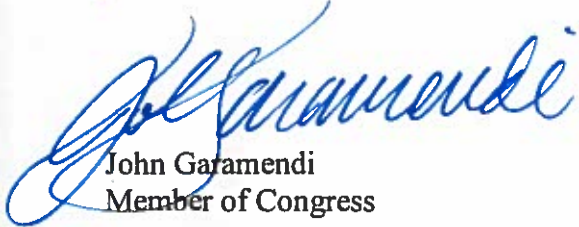
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Chellie Pingree  
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G.K. Butterfield  
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