

# Securing the Future of Universal Service

PROVIDERS  
HAVE INVESTED

**\$94.7  
BILLION**

IN 2023, AND

**\$2.2  
TRILLION**

SINCE 1996

**T**he Universal Service Fund is essential to maintaining connectivity for literally millions of our citizens living in rural America. But USF is at risk in the courts and under the weight of a contributions systems that is hopelessly out of date. The Administration, Congress, and the courts must act now to ensure its future. Without USF, literally overnight hundreds of local rural broadband providers could become insolvent, and thousands of rural hospitals, enterprises, schools, homes, and public safety responders could be without broadband connectivity.

## KEY POINTS

**Broadband Providers Invest Heavily in U.S. Networks:** America's broadband providers have a proven track record of investing heavily in the nation's broadband infrastructure. Providers have invested nearly \$2.2 trillion since 1996 and \$94.7 billion in 2023 alone. This annual investment is more than twice the IJJA's historic one-time \$42.5 billion commitment of public funds.

**USF is Essential to Maintaining Strong Rural Connectivity:** The combination of broadband providers' own investments alongside much-needed public investments puts the national goal of universal connectivity within reach. But like roads and bridges, these networks must be maintained and expanded over time and restored or repaired following natural disasters. This requires ongoing resources in remote areas that would not be possible without public support. The USF is the nation's primary vehicle for ensuring every home, business, school, and library gets and stays connected to affordable, quality broadband.

**The Current USF Funding Mechanism is Outdated & Regressive:** In the old days, USF helped build and maintain copper telephone networks in high-cost areas. USF was funded by landline telephone service because landline voice calls made up the bulk of network traffic. Those who used the network contributed to connectivity and affordability. However, today those who are using the networks are not contributing to connectivity and affordability. While the bulk of today's network traffic comes from Big Tech, USF is still funded by those who have landline telephone service. (According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 3 in 4 U.S. households had no fixed line voice service as of December 2023.) These few remaining landline customers are often older Americans and other vulnerable groups.