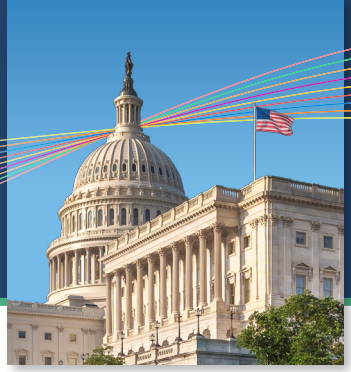
USTELECOM | THE BROADBAND ASSOCIATION



AN OPEN LETTER TO THE 120TH CONGRESS

The Next Era of Connectivity: A Broadband Blueprint

Dear Members of the 120th Congress,

As we move forward from this week's elections, across party lines, Americans want a government that works and leadership that makes a difference in their daily lives. Broadband connectivity is essential to delivering on that mandate.

A future-proof fiber broadband connection helps a small business reach customers, a student learn and a patient get care. It keeps families connected and puts opportunity within reach, and ensures our communities and our nation can compete and lead in the global innovation economy. America's broadband providers are investing in those connections every day, with $2.3 trillion invested in communications infrastructure since 1996 and $92.6 billion invested in 2025 alone.

As you prepare to begin a new Congress, three key principles should drive your commonsense agenda for our broadband future: will it help more Americans get connected, keep service affordable and protect the networks they rely on?

USTelecom's broadband blueprint keeps those questions front and center and offers practical ways for Congress to deliver results.

PRINCIPLE 1

Build Without Barriers

Every permitting delay leaves a community waiting for better connectivity. The FCC is doing important work to clear red tape at the state and local level so providers can connect more people. Congress should stand squarely behind continued progress.

Ways Congress can lead:

➔ **Include broadband in any federal permitting reform efforts.** As Congress continues to explore ways to remove government barriers to needed infrastructure projects in their districts, it must recognize the primacy of broadband, alongside roads, energy and other traditional infrastructure. Any reforms should advance clear deadlines, reasonable fees and streamlined approvals so construction crews can build and more communities can get connected. Remember that accelerated permitting means connecting more communities—rural hospitals, schools, small businesses, homes—with fast, reliable fiber internet.

PRINCIPLE 2

Keep Every Community Connected To Fast, Affordable Broadband

Broadband is an affordability success story in an economy where household costs keep climbing: USTelecom's Broadband Pricing Index shows inflation-adjusted prices for the most popular plans fell 43.6% since 2014, while download speeds rose 145%. Intense market competition and private investment are driving that value, while targeted support helps sustain service in rural areas where the economics are toughest. Congress should double-down on what is working, a highly successful model of competition and consumer choice, and modernize universal service to address the challenging economics in rural communities.

CONNECTIVITY in Action | BBT



BBT wanted to bring fiber to homes and businesses inside Big Bend National Park in West Texas. The project waited two years for federal approval while a required review of forest resources held it up in Washington. The location was the Chihuahuan Desert. A desert project stuck on a forest review is a pretty clear picture of why broadband permitting needs common sense at every level.

READ MORE ▸ USTelecom's Jonathan Spalter Senate testimony

Source BBT

CONNECTIVITY in Action
Silver Star Communications



Wyoming's mountain ranges, deep valleys and long distances between neighbors make for spectacular scenery and a tough place to build a network. For Silver Star Communications, that terrain is both a daily challenge and a reason to keep reaching farther. With support from the Universal Service Fund, Silver Star brings fast, reliable fiber internet to some of the hardest to reach rural communities, opening doors to remote work, learning and care. Its employees are neighbors, volunteers and core members of the communities they serve. Customers praise support teams that arrive quickly and treat them with courtesy, a reminder that keeping a community connected takes people as well as fiber.

READ MORE ▸ Silver Star's Community Service

Source: Silver Star Communications

Ways Congress can lead:

➜ **Protect the policies delivering greater affordability.** Promote competition and private investment, preserve targeted rural support and avoid regulations that discourage network upgrades, limit consumer choice and drive up consumer broadband bills.

➜ **Modernize USF funding.** Build on the important work of the congressional USF working group by expanding the contribution base to include contributions from large technology companies that benefit from broadband networks. Reinforce the legal foundation for USF administration to keep rural communities connected.

➜ **Protect critical communications infrastructure.** Pass legislation to stiffen penalties against criminals who steal and vandalize our nation's critical communications infrastructure.

➜ **Invest in lasting rural connectivity.** Preserve predictable support for maintaining and upgrading rural networks. Prioritize fiber in government-funded deployments wherever feasible, recognizing its capacity, reliability and ability to meet growing demand, and keep oversight efficient so resources go toward connecting communities.

PRINCIPLE 3

Protect What Connects Us

Protecting our networks and customers takes cooperation among providers, government and the industries scammers and hackers exploit. Congressional leadership can strengthen those partnerships and give defenders the legal certainty and flexibility to keep pace with changing threats.

CONNECTIVITY in Action | AT&T



At Discount Truck and Trailer in Pleasanton, Texas, reliable phone service helps keep business moving. After about 15 years on copper landlines, the rural small business upgraded to AT&T Business Voice and kept both existing phone numbers. General manager Beth Douglas says dependable service brings peace of mind and keeps the business connected to its customers. As AT&T recently reported, the company has discontinued copper services in more than 500 communities covering over 1.3 million locations across 18 states, with only 1% of eligible customers still using legacy copper voice technology. The goal is simple: upgrade the technology and keep the customer connected.

READ MORE ▸ Faster, More Reliable Connections — And Simplifying Our Network Along the Way (AT&T)

Source: AT&T

CONNECTIVITY in Action | NEX-TECH



In Kansas, Nex-Tech helps businesses put the same voluntary cybersecurity framework it uses itself to work protecting their operations. Its team also knows that a good defense depends on people speaking up. After helping companies through cyber incidents, Nex-Tech's Justin Dempsey kept hearing employees say they had spotted a suspicious email but simply deleted it. He urges businesses to take a lesson from Kansas' prairie dog sentries: when one spots danger, it alerts the others. Sharing that warning helps turn one employee's good instincts into a stronger defense for the whole team.

READ MORE ▸ Cybersecurity services | Nex-Tech's phishing guidance

Nex-Tech's Justin Dempsey gives customers and small business owners tutorials on smart cyber engagement. Source: Nex-Tech

Ways Congress can lead:

➜ **Pass a long-term reauthorization of CISA 2015.** If the law's protections expire on December 11, or receive only a short-term extension, the new Congress should move promptly to provide long-term certainty for voluntary cyber threat sharing between industry and government.

➜ **Crack down on scam networks and hold criminals accountable.** Prioritize criminal investigations and prosecutions of scam operations and strengthen laws and enforcement tools to disrupt the illicit technologies and infrastructure built specifically to carry out scams. Support industry-law enforcement partnerships, including USTelecom's Industry Traceback Group's work tracing illegal robocalls, scam calls, and scam texts to their source. The ITG is on the frontlines of the fight against scammers, working shoulder to shoulder with law enforcement, and serves as an expert resource for congressional discussions about scams and illegal robocalls.

➜ **Keep cyber defense adaptable.** Advance flexible, risk-based policies that support voluntary cyber threat sharing and collaboration. Avoid regulations that bury cyber defenders in checklists and paperwork and take time away from protecting our networks.

CONNECTIVITY in Action
Industry Traceback Group



Scammers hide behind spoofed numbers and other tricky tactics, but their calls still leave a trail. USTelecom's Industry Traceback Group follows that trail across providers and borders, helping identify where illegal calls originate and giving law enforcement information it can act on. In one debt-relief scheme that targeted Americans, including older adults, ITG traced fraudulent calls and a team member testified at the criminal trial. That work supported a federal investigation that led to a July 2026 conviction. Providers working together, investigators armed with evidence, and real consequences for the bad guys.

READ MORE▸ Industry Traceback Group

Source: USTelecom

A New Congress and a Practical Test

Americans will judge progress by what changes in their lives. More reliable connections, better value and safer networks are results worth working toward together.

We look forward to working with you to turn these principles into progress for the communities we all serve.

Jonathan Spalter
President & CEO
USTelecom – The Broadband Association