



Dear Fellow Rural Caucus Members (and Allies),

I am asking for your help in passing universal broadband legislation this year. **Broadband for all means broadband for all** – including our rural communities, low-income neighborhoods, reservations, agricultural working lands and other unserved and underserved areas throughout the state.

The state bills below represent **our best hope of bridging the digital divide**. They would, together, remove administrative barriers, provide funding for infrastructure expand eligibility for state funds to local governments and tribes, accurately identify where broadband needs to be deployed, and remove the ability of carriers to protect in perpetuity a near monopoly by establishing just one connection in a census block, forever delaying their intention to expand (which never happens).

The bills involving funding would enable California to leverage federal dollars, which the Biden Administration is committing to universal broadband. Each bill I am urging you to support has passed at least one and, in most cases, two subject matter committees. All are either awaiting a hearing in their house of origin's Appropriations Committee or are in that committee's Suspense File, during the last week of May.

In the various committee hearings these past few weeks the telecommunications firms have repeatedly claimed that the state should not "subsidize" competition. Our message to the Internet Service Providers is: *lead, follow or get out of the way*.

Please voice your strong support for these bills by writing/emailing/calling the members of the Assembly and Senate Appropriations Committees, especially those who represent you. Contact information is below.

NOTE: The descriptions below refer to the most significant and important items. You can find the latest versions of the bills at assembly.ca.gov, click on the "find legislation" tab at the bottom of the page and enter the bill number (be sure to use AB or SB plus the number), to see the full text, history, status and hearing dates.

There are other broadband bills in the hopper, but these five are the most significant and have advanced far enough to now need our help to get them across the finish line.

AB14 Communication; Broadband Services; California Advanced Services Fund (CASF), Aguiar-Curry: Extends the CASF, currently the sole source of funding for deploying broadband infrastructure beyond its sunset date in 2022, expands eligibility and promotes projects that deploy broadband to specified “anchor institutions” across the state, including county fairgrounds.

AB34 Broadband for All Act of 2022, Muratsuchi: Will place on the November 2022 ballot a bond measure authorizing up to \$10 billion in bonds to support the 2022 Broadband for All program to be administered by the Department of Technology for purposes of providing financial assistance for projects to deploy broadband infrastructure and broadband internet access services.

AB41 Broadband Infrastructure Deployment, Wood: Strengthens the state’s “dig once” policies, pushing CalTrans to be more proactive. It also requires that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) notify on their websites planned deployment of fiber, giving more transparency of where fiber is being laid for the purpose of possibly expanding availability in the surrounding area.

SB4 Communication: California Advanced Services Fund: Deaf and Disabled Telecommunication Program: Surcharges, Gonzalez: Extends and updates CASF increases the minimum broadband speed requirements, expands eligibility to local governments, tribal governments and non-profits, , and allows the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to issue bonds secured by CASF revenues.

SB28 Rural Broadband and Digital Infrastructure Video Competition Reform Act of 2021, Caballero: Requires the California Department of Technology (CDT) to compile an inventory of state-owned resources that may be available for use in the deployment of broadband and gives CPUC some oversight of cable video franchises to verify that specified services are being provided.

Where we Are: All of these bills have been or are destined be placed in their respective house Appropriations Committee’s Suspense Files. Suspense files can be the graveyards of many good bills, because they “put pressure on the General Fund”, in the words of the analysis. The difference with this group of bills is that several of them deal with the funding issue at least in part through continuation of an existing surcharge on broadband accounts. AB 14 puts a bond on the 2022 November ballot. And the Governor's budget proposal is forthcoming.

What to do: Please immediately contact the Senate Appropriations Committee for SB 4 and SB28 and the Assembly Appropriations Committee for AB14, AB34, and AB41 via email, fax or call in your support. Time is of the essence.

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Please know how much I appreciate you and all that you do.

With all my very best, Joy