

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4308

To provide for grants to finance broadband transmission in certain rural areas.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 8, 2017

Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico (for herself and Mr. O'HALLERAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To provide for grants to finance broadband transmission in certain rural areas.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Rural Broadband Ex-
5 pansion Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. COMMUNITY CONNECT GRANT PROGRAM.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture (in
8 this section referred to as the “Secretary”) shall make

1 grants to finance broadband transmission in rural areas
2 eligible for Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program
3 benefits authorized by section 2331 of the Food, Agri-
4 culture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, and shall
5 offer assistance to persons interested in applying for the
6 grants with respect to the grant application process.

7 (b) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall require
9 any entity receiving a grant under this section to
10 submit annual reports until 3 years after completion
11 of the project for which the grant is made, in a for-
12 mat specified by the Secretary, that describes—

13 (A) the use by the entity of the grant, in-
14 cluding new equipment and capacity enhance-
15 ments that support high-speed broadband ac-
16 cess for educational institutions, health care
17 providers, and public safety service providers
18 (including the estimated number of end users
19 who are currently using or forecasted to use the
20 new or upgraded infrastructure); and

21 (B) the progress towards fulfilling the ob-
22 jectives for which the grant is made, includ-
23 ing—

24 (i) the number and location of resi-
25 dences and businesses that will receive new

1 broadband service, existing network service
2 improvements, and facility upgrades result-
3 ing from the grant;

4 (ii) the speed of broadband service;

5 (iii) the average price of broadband
6 service in a proposed service area;

7 (iv) any changes in broadband service
8 adoption rates, including new subscribers
9 generated from demand-side projects; and

10 (v) any other metrics the Secretary
11 determines to be appropriate.

12 (2) ADDITIONAL REPORTING.—The Secretary
13 may require any additional reporting and informa-
14 tion by any recipient of a grant under this section
15 so as to ensure compliance with this section.

16 (c) AUDITS.—The Inspector General, Department of
17 Agriculture, shall conduct annual audits of the grant pro-
18 gram provided for in this section, and shall direct the Sec-
19 retary to implement such recommendations as the Inspec-
20 tor General finds necessary to ensure that the funds made
21 available under subsection (f) are used properly and effi-
22 ciently.

23 (d) GAO REPORTS.—The Comptroller General of the
24 United States shall submit to the Secretary annual reports

1 that assess the progress and level of success of the grant
2 program provided for in this section.

3 (e) ANNUAL REPORTS TO THE CONGRESS.—The Sec-
4 retary shall submit an annual report to the Committee on
5 Agriculture and the Committee on Energy and Commerce
6 of the House of Representatives and the Committee on
7 Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and the Committee
8 on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate
9 on how the grant funds provided under subsection (a) were
10 used by the recipients, how many households, businesses,
11 community centers, and critical community facilities re-
12 ceived broadband service as a result of the grants, in
13 which regions the broadband service was provided, how
14 many applications for the grants were denied, and how
15 many of the grants were provided.

16 (f) LIMITATIONS ON AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIA-
17 TIONS.—To carry out this section, there are authorized
18 to be appropriated to the Secretary \$100,000,000 for each
19 of fiscal years 2019 through 2023, to remain available
20 until expended, not less than 90 percent of which shall
21 be available for grants under subsection (a).

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