

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2601

To direct the Federal Communications Commission to establish the Office of Rural Telecommunications, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 8, 2019

Mr. PETERSON (for himself and Mr. CARTER of Georgia) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To direct the Federal Communications Commission to establish the Office of Rural Telecommunications, and for other purposes.

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 “Office of Rural Tele-
5 communications Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. OFFICE OF RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS.**

7 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 6 months after
8 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Commission
9 shall establish an Office of Rural Telecommunications.

1 (b) DUTIES.—The Office shall have the following du-
2 ties:

3 (1) Coordinate efforts with the Rural Utilities
4 Service of the Department of Agriculture and the
5 National Telecommunications and Information Ad-
6 ministration to ensure the mutual and complemen-
7 tary success of the Commission’s initiatives and the
8 programs overseen by these other agencies.

9 (2) Coordinate with the Universal Service Ad-
10 ministrative Company to maintain updated informa-
11 tion regarding Connect America Fund programs
12 that deploy rural broadband.

13 (3) Coordinate with other agencies to remove
14 barriers to broadband deployment.

15 (4) Assess and publish the impact of the actions
16 of the Commission on rural consumers before the ac-
17 tions are voted upon or taken.

18 (5) Measure broadband adoption rates in rural
19 areas.

20 (6) Coordinate with other bureaus and offices
21 of the Commission and other agencies to ensure con-
22 sistency and updating of broadband mapping in
23 rural areas.

24 (7) Not less frequently than annually, report to
25 Congress on the efforts of the Office to promote and

1 sustain quality and affordable rural communications,
2 including voice and broadband.

3 (8) Dedicate a representative to address stake-
4 holder questions and concerns.

5 (c) NO ADDITIONAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—
6 Nothing in this section shall create any additional report-
7 ing requirement for a broadband provider.

8 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 (1) AGENCY.—The term “agency” has the
10 meaning given that term in section 551 of title 5,
11 United States Code.

12 (2) BROADBAND.—The term “broadband”
13 means—

14 (A) a mass-market retail service by wire or
15 radio that provides the capability to transmit
16 data to and receive data from all or substan-
17 tially all internet endpoints, including any capa-
18 bilities that are incidental to and enable the op-
19 eration of the communications service, but ex-
20 cluding dial-up internet access service; and

21 (B) any service that the Commission finds
22 to be providing a functional equivalent of the
23 service described in subparagraph (A).

24 (3) COMMISSION.—The term “Commission”
25 means the Federal Communications Commission.

1 (4) OFFICE.—The term “Office” means the Of-
2 fice of Rural Telecommunications established pursu-
3 ant to subsection (a).

4 (5) RURAL AREA.—The term “rural area”
5 means any area other than—

6 (A) a city, town, or incorporated area that
7 has a population of more than 20,000 inhab-
8 itants; or

9 (B) an urbanized area contiguous and ad-
10 jacent to a city or town that has a population
11 of more than 50,000 inhabitants.

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