



Rural Broadband Protection Act of 2023

Introduced by Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (W.Va.) and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (Minn.)

The Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) high-cost programs provide funding to telecom carriers to provide service in rural areas where the market alone cannot support the substantial cost of deploying network infrastructure and providing connectivity. Historically, it has subsidized voice service to ensure that rates in rural and urban areas are reasonably comparable. But with a series of reform orders that began in 2011, the FCC is modernizing the High Cost program to support broadband to ensure that all people in America – no matter where they live – have access to robust, affordable connectivity to fully participate in today’s society.

This modernized program is called the Connect America Fund, and it consists of a series of new funds that rely on incentive-based models and competitive bidding to award carriers a set amount of support to build out broadband to a defined number of locations in unserved and underserved areas.

The Rural Broadband Protection Act (RBPA) would add accountability and transparency to closing the digital divide. **RBPA** will provide essential safeguards to the Universal Service Funds high-cost programs by ensuring that funding goes to companies with both a proven track record of success and have demonstrated sound judgment in deploying in hard-to-serve areas.