

# **Broadband Data Improvement Act**

*Introduced by Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawai'i), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), and Jon Tester (D-Mont.)*

Fast, reliable broadband access is essential for participation in the 21st century economy, yet too many areas of the country still lack access or are underserved by slow speeds. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are charged with allocating billions of dollars each year to ensure broadband coverage gaps are closed. Still, there is broad bipartisan consensus that the data the FCC collects is not sufficiently accurate or granular to pinpoint these gaps or guide decision-making on where funds should be directed to support broadband buildout.

The *Broadband Data Improvement Act of 2019* (BDIA) requires broadband providers to report data to create an improved National Broadband Map that is significantly more accurate and granular, and subject to an ongoing and multi-faceted challenge, validation, and refinement process. Accurate and granular data will enable federal agencies to target funding to the areas the need it the most, close the remaining coverage gaps, and ensure accountability and transparency.

BDIA builds upon the many lessons learned from past state and federal data collection and mapping efforts to comprehensively improve the National Broadband Map in the following key ways:

- **Granular Service Availability Data** – Requires broadband providers to report service availability by submitting GIS shapefiles that indicate actual network coverage completely updating or replacing the current Form 477 process.
- **Three-pronged Data Validation Process** –
  - The collection of public feedback regarding the accuracy of the map, obtained via a new feedback tool that will be integrated into the online mapping platform.
  - The acquisition of third-party commercial datasets on broadband availability that are analyzed and compared against provider-reported data.
  - Targeted on-the-ground field validation of services in areas where public feedback and third-party data suggest the map is incorrect.
- **Periodic Challenge Process** – Requires the establishment of an ongoing, efficient, and scheduled process by which the public at large and broadband service providers may challenge the map, and through which the FCC analyzes and resolves any challenges to update the map accordingly.
- **Federal Funding Programs Guidance and Broadband Investments Tracking** – Requires the National Broadband Map to be utilized by Federal agencies to identify areas that remain unserved and track where awarded funds have actually resulted in broadband buildout.
- **Data Submission Assistance to Small Providers** – Minimizes the burden on smaller service providers that may not have GIS capabilities by providing data submission assistance to ensure that the information they report is as accurate as possible.