




Broadband Access in Rural America

Broadband-enabled services such as telemedicine, telehealth, distance learning, and online business/entrepreneurial opportunities improve our economy, our health and our quality of life. However, in rural America many communities are more likely to lack adequate broadband access than the urban areas of the nation. That translates into more rural residents missing out on opportunities for entrepreneurship, education, telemedicine, economic development, and civic participation. As a result, rural America is in danger of falling further behind. While the national penetration rate is 66 percent, only half of rural residents have broadband in their homes (Pew Internet & American Life Project 2010). The level of high speed broadband is also very low for the needs of our clinics, hospitals, and individual providers.

Rural America is diverse in its terrains, cultures, foods, peoples, and knowledge. There is no one-size-fits-all broadband solution for connecting rural communities. Therefore, the diversity of rural America must be at the forefront of national broadband policies. We should consider this issue as a “societal good” issue that must be addressed for communities in our nation.

- Therefore, the nation needs and NRHA supports broadband policies that acknowledge high-speed online access as a necessity, not a luxury. All communities deserve a chance to participate in our digital future.
- Therefore, in order to close the digital divide, the National Rural Health Association supports policies and efforts that address this digital divide, especially the lack of a basic accessible model for all of rural America. This model will enable us to create local jobs, encourage rural innovation, and help build the investment in rural communities. Broadband services are now a basic infrastructure for our nation. We need it to remain competitive in the world.
- Therefore, NRHA supports policy development and actions which will remove barriers such as public support for necessary broadband services, Federal and state licensing, credentialing and reimbursement restrictions that impede increasing use of telemedicine, telehealth and distance learning services.
- Therefore, NRHA would advocate for a national policy that would enable a redesign of the present telecom subsidy models, universal access policies that would enable all citizens’ access to an affordable and appropriately configured broadband system.

We believe that the ability of our nation to compete in the world and to better care for our citizens is tied to our broadband capacity.



In addition, in-home care models are being developed but cannot be deployed in areas lacking adequate service. We believe that this issue is about renewal and more importantly health, health care and quality of life for all people in our nation.

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