

**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
May 5-6, 2021
Virtual**

Resolution No. 1: Expansion of Broadband in Rural Areas

Origin: Veterans Employment & Education Commission

Submitted by: Veterans Employment & Education Commission

WHEREAS, More than 22 million veterans live in the United States, of which, more than 5.6 million live in rural or small-town communities; and

WHEREAS, There are 2.52 million veteran-owned small business in America; and

WHEREAS, There are over 1.1 million veteran-owned businesses in rural areas throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, There is a shortage of small business resources in rural areas of the country, such as limited broadband services; and

WHEREAS, Rural small business owners deal with a lack of access to parts and supplies, broadband access, lack of facilitators and mentors, poor financial literacy and lack of funding for programs that serve rural areas; and

WHEREAS, Rural e-connectivity supports economic development for the whole nation through access to capital and global markets, job training and workforce development, innovation and technology, and enhanced quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Broadband is a tool that enables increased productivity for farms, factories, forests, mining, and small business; and

WHEREAS, Connectivity is especially vital for agriculture, the original “Made in America” industry, to increase farm productivity to feed the world; and

WHEREAS, High-speed broadband, and the digital opportunity it brings, can be essential to innovation, economic opportunity, health care, and civic engagement in today’s modern society, and rural areas continue to lack access due, in part, to challenges with providing service to areas where deployment costs are high, and returns in investments are low; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is charged with encouraging the deployment on a reasonable and timely basis of advanced telecommunications capability to all Americans, by removing barriers to infrastructure investment and by promoting competition in the telecommunication market; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers telephone service and broadband in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, The National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s BroadbandUSA program of the Department of Commerce (DOC) serves communities, industry, and nonprofits that want to expand broadband infrastructure and promote digital inclusion; and

WHEREAS, Rural prosperity can only truly be achieved by connecting rural American to high-speed internet; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on May 5-6, 2021, That The American Legion urges the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Department of Commerce (DOC) to prioritize the expansion of broadband in rural America; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the FCC, USDA and DOC continue to identify where gaps in broadband deployment still exist; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the FCC and USDA improve broadband mapping data and information that will aid in advancing efforts to close the digital divide; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the FCC, USDA and DOC improve loans and grants transparency and reporting; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the FCC, USDA and DOC engage with private and public partners to effectively identify and address broadband deployment challenges.