

## **RURAL INTERNET IMPROVEMENT ACT**

“We applaud the work of Senators John Thune, Ben Ray Luján, Amy Klobuchar, and Deb Fischer to introduce legislation focused on helping broadband reach more Americans,” **said NCTA – The Internet and Television Association**. “The Rural Internet Improvement Act of 2023 would replace existing programs with a revised ReConnect program that would enhance participation and results so more communities can be connected to broadband even faster. Most significantly, this bill would direct funding for network expansion to areas where at least 90 percent of household’s lack access to broadband, and it would encourage reliance on applicants with demonstrated experience constructing and operating broadband networks in order to promote network construction that is on budget and on time. These are solid improvements to the current program that should be adopted as part of next year’s farm bill. Deploying robust, affordable high-speed broadband to all Americans is a key priority for cable providers, so we look forward to working with members on passage of this legislation.”

“Senator Thune has long been a leader in promoting and sustaining better access to broadband in rural areas, and NTCA appreciates his continued interest and leadership in examining ways to improve the workings of USDA’s ReConnect Loan and Grant Program,” **said Shirley Bloomfield, CEO of NTCA – the Rural Broadband Association**. “We look forward to conversations with Senator Thune and his colleagues in Congress about how best to build upon the early successes of this program and how best to coordinate this program with other essential broadband-related initiatives and private sector efforts.”

“Senators Thune, Luján, Klobuchar, and Fischer understand that connecting our nation’s rural areas to high-speed broadband requires close coordination across federal agencies,” **said Jonathan Spalter, president and CEO of USTelecom – The Broadband Association**. “Making USDA’s ReConnect Pilot Program permanent and establishing greater transparency and accountability will further help bridge the digital divide, allowing rural communities to fully participate in our connected society.”

“Broadband is no longer a luxury: it is a necessity,” **said Zippy Duvall, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation**. “The American Farm Bureau has long prioritized expanding broadband access in rural America, and we applaud Senators Thune, Luján, Klobuchar, and Fischer for working to streamline current broadband programming to ensure investments go to those areas that still are not served. Ensuring limited resources are targeted to those most in need will help all rural Americans access the services and opportunities they need to thrive in today’s economy.”

“The American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) applauds Senators Thune, Luján, Klobuchar, and Fischer for their leadership in addressing the critical issue of rural broadband access in America,” **said Andy LaVigne, president and CEO of the American Seed Trade Association.** “The Rural Internet Improvement Act would take necessary steps to address the digital divide in rural communities. Seed companies and their customers rely on connectivity, and ASTA appreciates the Senators’ efforts in establishing accountability for existing programs and innovative ways to streamline processes to support rural America. We appreciate Congress’ commitment to this critical issue, and we look forward to working together as they consider this key legislation.”

“The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association is grateful to Senators Thune, Luján, Klobuchar, and Fischer for prioritizing agriculture innovation and progress through the Rural Internet Improvement Act,” **said Allison Rivera, executive director of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association.** “In rural America, internet access opens doors to increased efficiency, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. On-farm efficiency increases when producers are able to communicate from remote areas of their operation, compete in a fast-paced, competitive global marketplace, and use precision agriculture technologies that facilitate improvement of the land and natural resources. This legislation will ensure rural connectivity is afforded to a greater number of producers whose businesses simply cannot maintain viability for the future without it.”