To address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. THUNE (for himself, Mr. Tester, Mr. Peters, Mr. Wicker, and Mr. Moran) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on ________________

A BILL

To address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
4 This Act may be cited as the “Telecommunications
5 Skilled Workforce Act”.
6 SEC. 2. TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERAGENCY WORKING
7 GROUP.
8 (a) In General.—Part I of title III of the Commu-
9 nications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 301 et seq.) is amended
10 by adding at the end the following:
"SEC. 344. TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP."

“(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) 5G.—The term ‘5G’, with respect to wireless infrastructure and wireless technology, means fifth-generation wireless infrastructure and wireless technology.

“(2) RURAL AREA.—The term ‘rural area’ means any area other than—

“(A) a city, town, or incorporated area that has a population of more than 20,000 inhabitants; or

“(B) an urbanized area adjacent to a city or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants.

“(3) TELECOMMUNICATIONS INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP.—The term ‘telecommunications interagency working group’ means the interagency working group established under subsection (b).

“(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this section, the Chairman of the Commission, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, shall establish within the Commission an interagency working group to develop recommendations to address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry.
“(c) Duties.—In developing recommendations under subsection (b), the telecommunications interagency working group shall—

“(1) determine whether, and if so how, any Federal laws (including regulations), guidance, policies, or practices, or any budgetary constraints, inhibit institutions of higher education (as defined in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001)) or for-profit businesses from establishing, adopting, or expanding programs intended to address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry, including the workforce needed to build and maintain the 5G wireless infrastructure necessary to support 5G wireless technology;

“(2) identify potential policies and programs that could encourage and improve coordination among Federal agencies, between Federal agencies and States, and among States, on telecommunications workforce needs;

“(3) identify ways in which existing Federal programs, including programs that help facilitate the employment of veterans and military personnel transitioning into civilian life, could be leveraged to
help address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry;

“(4) identify ways to encourage individuals and for-profit businesses to participate in qualified industry-led workforce development programs, including the Telecommunications Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program;

“(5) identify ways to improve recruitment in qualified industry-led workforce development programs, including the Telecommunications Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program and other industry-recognized apprenticeship programs; and

“(6) identify Federal incentives that could be provided to institutions of higher education, for-profit businesses, State workforce development boards established under section 101 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3111), or other relevant stakeholders to establish or adopt programs, or expand current programs, to address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry, including such needs in rural areas.

“(d) Members.—The telecommunications inter-agency working group shall be composed of representatives of such Federal agencies and relevant non-Federal industry stakeholder organizations as the Chairman of the
Commission, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, considers appropriate, including—

“(1) a representative of the Department of Education, appointed by the Secretary of Education;

“(2) a representative of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, appointed by the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information;

“(3) a representative of the Department of Commerce, appointed by the Secretary of Commerce;

“(4) a representative of the Commission, appointed by the Chairman of the Commission;

“(5) a representative of the Telecommunications Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program, appointed by the Secretary of Labor;

“(6) a representative of a telecommunications industry association, appointed by the Chairman of the Commission;

“(7) a representative of an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization, appointed by the Secretary of Labor;

“(8) a representative of a rural telecommunications carrier, appointed by the Chairman of the Commission;
“(9) a representative of a telecommunications contractor firm, appointed by the Chairman of the Commission;

“(10) a representative of a minority institution (as defined in section 365 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067k)), appointed by the Secretary of Education; and

“(11) a representative of a labor organization, appointed by the Secretary of Labor.

“(e) NO COMPENSATION.—A member of the telecommunications interagency working group shall serve without compensation.

“(f) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 180 days after the date on which the telecommunications interagency working group is established, the working group shall submit a report containing recommendations to address the workforce needs of the telecommunications industry to—

“(1) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate;

“(2) the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate;

“(3) the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives; and
“(4) the Committee on Education and Labor of
the House of Representatives.
“(g) NONAPPLICABILITY OF FACA.—The Federal
Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not apply
to the telecommunications interagency working group.”.

(b) SUNSET.—Section 344 of the Communications
Act of 1934, as added by subsection (a), shall be repealed
on the day after the date on which the interagency work-
ing group established under subsection (b) of that section
submits the report to Congress under subsection (f) of
that section.

SEC. 3. TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKFORCE GUIDANCE.

Not later than 270 days after the date of enactment
of this Act, the Chairman of the Federal Communications
Commission, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor,
shall establish and issue guidance on how States can ad-
dress the workforce needs of the telecommunications in-
dustry, including guidance on how a State workforce de-
velopment board established under section 101 of the
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C.
3111) can—
(1) utilize Federal resources available to States
to meet the workforce needs of the telecommuni-
cations industry; and
(2) promote and improve recruitment in qualified industry-led workforce development programs, including the Telecommunications Industry Registered Apprenticeship Program.

SEC. 4. GAO ASSESSMENT OF WORKFORCE NEEDS OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) 5G.—The term “5G”, with respect to wireless infrastructure and wireless technology, means fifth-generation wireless infrastructure and wireless technology.

(2) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate;

(B) the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate;

(C) the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives; and

(D) the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives.

(3) BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE.—The term “broadband infrastructure” means any buried, underground, or aerial facility, and any wireless or
wireline connection, that enables users to send and receive voice, video, data, graphics, or any combination thereof.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report that estimates the number of skilled telecommunications workers that will be required to build and maintain—

(1) broadband infrastructure in rural areas;

and

(2) the 5G wireless infrastructure needed to support 5G wireless technology.