

ACCESS TO HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICE IN RURAL AREAS

ISSUE:

Reliable and affordable high-speed internet e-Connectivity, or electronic connectivity, is fundamental for economic activity throughout the US, including in the convenience services industry. Access to high-speed internet is vital for a diverse set of industries and acts as a catalyst for rural prosperity by enabling efficient, modern communications between rural American households, office buildings, schools, and healthcare centers as well as markets and customers around the world.

In Section 706 the Telecommunications Act of 1996 Congress required the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to report annually on whether broadband “is being deployed to all Americans in a reasonable and timely fashion.” Unfortunately, the most recent report finds that approximately 19 million Americans – 6 percent of the population – still lack access to fixed broadband service at threshold speeds. In rural areas, nearly one-fourth of the population – 14.5 million people – lack access to this service. In tribal areas, nearly one-third of the population lacks access.

Because of this, The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Congress, and the Administration have all made promoting access to high speed internet in these areas a priority.

NAMA POSITION:

NAMA supports the expansion of affordable high-speed internet in the United States, and the adoption of policies that will promote equitable access.

High-speed internet will allow the convenience services industry to increase its footprint in currently underserved areas. Expanding connectivity for vending and unattended retail locations (micro markets) will enable operators to utilize modern payment methods, track product sales and planogram data, and reduce their carbon footprint by increasing sustainable stocking practices through better data access.