



COMMITTEE ON

# TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

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## *H.R. 6491 - The Eliminating Barriers to Rural Internet Development Grant Eligibility (E-BRIDGE) Act*

### Fact Sheet

#### **Purpose:**

The *E-BRIDGE Act* ensures that rural and economically distressed communities are equipped to readily use Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants to develop high-speed broadband access.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear how critical, but often limited, access to broadband service is in our communities. Internet is the lifeline that allows elderly people to stay safely at home, businesses to operate, children to learn, and entrepreneurs to innovate.

This bill will spur projects under EDA grant programs to give rural and poor communities online access to medical care, schools, the workplace, food, and essential services. The bill removes hurdles for broadband projects under EDA grants, ensuring that local communities can partner with the private sector and giving communities more flexibility in complying with their funding match requirements.

#### **Summary of the E-BRIDGE Act:**

- Eliminates barriers to investments in broadband in distressed communities, making them eligible for EDA grants.
- Clarifies that eligible recipients may include public-private partnerships and consortiums to leverage private sector expertise in project development.
- Provides flexibility in the procurement process to account for limited availability of broadband services in distressed communities.
- Clarifies that funds can be combined with other federal resources.
- Provides flexibility on accounting for in-kind methods to meet non-federal cost share.