

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1328, the ACCESS BROADBAND Act.

To put it simply - people in every state of our country, including Indiana, need better access to the internet. And this is no surprise to us – every time I am home in the Fifth District, Hoosiers, particularly from more rural areas, tell me they are afraid of being left behind as the 21st century economy continues to be more and more reliant on technology.

I've spoken to members of the Indiana Farm Bureau who have voiced their continued concerns with the level of connectivity in Indiana. They cannot wait and hope for new technology to fix their connectivity problems that have existed for years.

Additionally, today more and more schools require homework to be submitted electronically, tests are taken online, and class notes are posted on school websites. When students can't access the internet, they have to travel to a library daily in order to keep up with their studies or they risk falling behind in class.

And we can't forget about the impact the internet has had on businesses of all sizes, especially small businesses. This week is National Small Business Week – and small businesses from across the country are meeting with Members of Congress or their staff about the obstacles they face as they work to grow their businesses. Each year, these advocates highlight the need for the federal government to better support their efforts, and a significant part of that equation is working to ensure better and faster access to the internet, no matter where their business is located or no matter how small or large it is. When small businesses don't have broadband internet access, their communities suffer and they miss opportunities to create 21st century jobs, drive innovation and increase our country's global competitiveness.

For all of these reasons and more, we must do more to support our communities in an age where internet connectivity is crucial to success.

Indiana has recognized this critical need and has made a commitment to invest \$100 million in supporting broadband access across the state for underserved areas. This NextLevel connections program is exactly the kind of idea that the ACCESS BROADBAND Act will help support. By making federal resources easier to access, Indiana will be able to better support its own internet access efforts.

The ACCESS BROADBAND ACT is an important step towards eliminating broadband access difficulties. This bill would require the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to create an office to coordinate all federal efforts that support broadband deployment and access. This office would perform outreach to communities in every corner of our country to inform them of how they can best support internet access development. It would also require the office to standardize applications for financial assistance or grants and work to create a single application for all Federal broadband support programs.

May 8, 2019

H.R. 1328 Floor Remarks

Rep. Susan W. Brooks

This bill is about bringing the benefits of broadband communications into the lives of our constituents. I am glad Congress is acting on a solution to help address this problem faced by Hoosiers and Americans across the country. I thank the gentleman from New York, Representative Tonko, for letting me partner with him on this legislation and look forward to working with him in the future.

Thank you, and I urge all my colleagues in the House to support this measure. I yield back the balance of my time.