



*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.
For An Equitable Future.*

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

September 11, 2026

The Honorable Deb Fischer
United States Senate
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Ray Luján
United States Senate
498 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Hudson
U.S. House of Representatives
2112 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Doris Matsui
U.S. House of Representatives
2206 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Fischer, Senator Luján, Representative Hudson, and Representative Matsui:

As the bipartisan, bicameral Universal Service Fund Working Group works to reach consensus on legislation to reform the Universal Service Fund, the National Urban League and the undersigned organizations write to re-emphasize several core principles that we believe should guide any final proposal.

For decades, universal service has played a vital role in expanding access to communications services for low-income households, rural and Tribal communities, schools and libraries, rural health care providers, and other underserved communities. Yet the existing USF funding mechanism has not kept pace with changes in how Americans communicate or with the realities of today's internet economy. Reform is necessary to ensure that universal service remains sustainable and capable of meeting the nation's connectivity needs.

We urge the Working Group to ensure any legislative proposals reflect the following principles:

I. Protect broadband affordability.

Affordable internet access is essential to full participation in modern American life, and the economic pressure on household budgets remains a significant barrier to connectivity for millions of families. USF reform should advance, not undermine, the objective of making broadband more affordable. Policymakers should avoid funding approaches that would predictably increase the amounts consumers pay for broadband and risk leaving more households on the wrong side of the digital divide. Any reform should be designed



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to avoid raising costs for individual consumers and working families, particularly low-income households and communities that already face persistent barriers to broadband adoption. Reform should also provide for a permanent and adequate broadband affordability benefit within the Universal Service Fund so that low-income households can obtain and maintain reliable connectivity.

II. Modernize and broaden the contribution base.

The USF contribution framework should better reflect the realities of today's internet environment and today's economy. Large market participants increasingly depend upon, and derive substantial value from, the widespread availability and adoption of broadband. A modernized contribution framework should therefore draw on a sufficiently broad base, including large companies that benefit the most from the internet economy, rather than shifting a greater share of the burden onto residential consumers and working families. Broadening responsibility in this way can help sustain universal service while keeping the contribution burden as low and broadly shared as possible.

III. Preserve and strengthen USF's core mission.

Reform should strengthen the ability of universal service programs to connect low-income, rural, Tribal, and other underserved communities to reliable and affordable communications services. Any final proposal should preserve and strengthen the distinct and complementary missions of Lifeline, E-Rate, the High-Cost Program, and the Rural Health Care Program, while modernizing each to meet evolving connectivity needs. Policymakers should not pit affordability, rural deployment, educational connectivity, and health care connectivity against one another.

IV. Ensure sustainable, stable, and accountable Universal Service.

Universal service requires a durable and predictable funding structure that provides long-term certainty for consumers, communities, participating institutions, and service providers. Reform should also promote transparent and efficient administration, and include appropriate oversight to ensure that resources are used effectively and produce meaningful connectivity outcomes. Accountability measures should protect program integrity and consumers without creating unnecessary barriers for eligible households or underserved communities.

We appreciate the Working Group's bipartisan efforts and urge you to incorporate these principles as you complete your work.

Sincerely,

National Urban League



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Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Center for New Liberalism
Consumer Action
Hispanic Federation
HTTP
Japanese American Citizens League
LGBT Tech
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Multicultural Media Telecom and Internet Council
NAACP
National Action Network
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation/Black Women's Roundtable
National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of low-income clients
National Hispanic Media Coalition
NCNW
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
UnidosUS
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates
SER National Inc.