



SHLB Coalition Congressional Policy Meeting Notes

5.12.26

I. Announcements

A. Register for AnchorNets!

B. Webinars

1. ICYMI: [Defending the USF After SCOTUS](#) recording available
2. Upcoming:
 - a) Making Sense of the New E-Rate Bidding Portal
 - b) June 3, 2026, 2 pm ET
 - c) [Register here](#)

II. Broadband Bills Moving Through Congress

A. Speaker: Caroline Stratton, Benton

B. <https://www.benton.org/blog/house-advances-broadband-legislation>

C. Bills that Passed the House

1. Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act (H.R. 1681)
 - a) Supports review of requests for communications use authorizations on public land
 - b)
2. Federal Broadband Deployment Tracking Act (H.R. 1343)
 - a) NTIA needs to submit a plan to congressional committees describing the proposed process to track federal permit applications for communications use authorizations (Form 299)
 - (1) This is asking how NTIA plans to track applications

D. New Bill

1. Accelerating Broadband Permits Acts of 2026 (s.4448)
 - a) Introduced on 04.30.26 by Thune and Lujan (Bipartisan support)
 - b) BEAD: dashboard to track received vs. expended funds by eligible entity. Number of locations where service has been made available and number of locations “at which broadband service has been utilized”
 - (1) Requires NTIA to create a dashboards to showcase how much funds have been spent, provide numbers of locations where services were made available and the number of locations where broadband services have been utilized.
 - (a) Note: how do we define “utilized”?

- (i) I think that there could be a potential nod here to recent efforts to remove locations that are not eligible (such as sheds)
 - (ii) -: I hope they'll also publish the subscription price for the utilized broadband service. Seeing utilization data without expense data is only half of the picture
 - (iii) -: I'm also interested in ISPs' low cost service offerings
- (b) Congress is interested that the BEAD program achieves its goals and to track where the money is flowing.
- (c) -: How does the requirement of S.4448 differ from the data disclosure requirements of the four CSV file required by the NTIA (which the NTIA has yet to release in final form)
 - (i) This bill looks like its very high level information
- (d) -: Would the map denote locations that weren't previously served but are now served by BEAD specifically?
 - (i) Would imagine that this would be the goal. Not sure if it would be captured in "map" form, or more of a bar chart.
- c) Tool to help eligible entities identify Federal permitting requirements for each subgrantee and monitor subgrantee progress towards obtaining Federal permits
 - (1) Think of "Dominos Pizza tracker" for federal permitting
- d) Tracks and improve the time it takes to process communications use applications
 - (1) Analyze and address delays, report to committees, alert staff to "at risk" applications
- e) Move broadband projects into the FAST-41 permitting process
 - (1) Permitting is not just a broadband program
 - (2) Fast-41 has high level scrutiny to ensure that projects move along in a timely manner
 - (a) This bill would be put under this to ensure that the broadband projects move along.

2. Member Questions

- a) -: Why is permitting such a hot topic right now?
 - (1) In the series of things that could slow BEAD projects down, federal permitting, that members of congress have control over to prevent obstacles. Helps agencies remain on the same page and provide some transparency to the states.

E. Bills that passed the House and Senate

1. Rural Broadband Protection Act of 2025 (S. 98)

- a) Vet applicants for USF High Cost program funds (Connecting America, RDOF) that they possess “the technical, financial, and operations capabilities, and has a reasonable business plan, to deploy the proposed network and deliver services with the relevant performance characteristics and requirements”
- b) Financial penalties for pre-authorization defaults: \$9,000 per violation, base forfeiture not below 30% of applicants total support
 - (1) –: Considering whether this is a direct response to RDOF defaults (we don’t want to fund projects unless awardees will do what they say they are going to do)
 - (2) What can you say about RDOF defaults (including pending defaults)?
 - (a) –: In some states, we know this is a great concern. Benton is planning to offer an update on RDOF defaults soon.
 - (b) –: FCC info says defaults impacted 37% of locations. See https://www.benton.org/blog/new-dataset-reveals-imp-act-rdof-defaults-each-state?utm_campaign=Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sendgrid
 - (3) –: Do we think the President will sign it?
 - (a) Yes! President Trump on Monday signed a USF reform bill championed by Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) that would crack down on ISPs that fail to fulfill their broadband deployment promises. Under S. 98, the Rural Broadband Protection Act, the FCC would have 180 day to create rules design to closely vet ISP applicants for funds to deploy broadband in high-cost areas.

F. BEAD Subgrantees: Protect Your Rights

- 1. <https://www.ntca.org/sites/default/files/documents/2026-05/bead-subgrantee-doc.pdf>
 - a) Intended for BEAD subgrantees (ISPs) to read.
- 2. Describes things that states must and must not do in contracts with subgrantees
 - a) Rate-Regulation Prohibition (no direct or indirect imposition of rates/terms/conditions of service, no net neutrality, open access, or “utility-style rules”
 - (1) –: Could cause concern for states that do include these things (California, New York)

- b) Permitting - make timely decisions (90 days), limit permitting costs, establish permitting roundtables, track/post/submit unresolved subgrantee complains
- 3. NTIA is preparing for a situation where some states might try to do things that are not covered under BEAD regulations.
- 4. Protect Your Rights... [questions that we're asking]
 - a) What legal authority does NTIA have to require states to overturn or not enforce their own laws?
 - b) How can states guarantee permitting timelines over which they have no control?
 - c) How will NTIA enforce prohibitions and mandates in BEAD contracts that have already been signed?
- 5. Member questions:
 - a) -: What about state-level rate cap bills? Do BEAD projects get exempted?
 - (1) -: this is more or less what we assumed would happen.
- G. Benton is working on a study on the State Broadband offices and what their current challenges are - they will share when they have the information
- H. Informational Benton articles:
 - 1. <https://www.benton.org/blog/ntia-encourages-isps-ensure-state-bead-contracts-comply-agency-priorities>
 - 2. <https://www.benton.org/blog/new-bill-aims-track-bead-progress>
 - 3. <https://www.benton.org/blog/house-advances-broadband-legislation>
 - 4. <https://www.benton.org/blog/rural-broadband-protection-act-meets-high-cost-program-crossroads>
- I. Final Questions/Discussion:
 - 1. -: Why is the Rural Broadband Protection Act necessary? I thought the FCC already does what this bill requires (they just only do it *after* the auction takes place). It seems like this bill would require the FCC to analyze the financial position of all participants, even if not all of them will be winners. Could it disincentivize the FCC from doing future reverse auctions (given that they have to do more work up front)?
 - a) This was part of the short-form long-form process for RDOF. The idea here is to bring the long-form process up earlier.
 - b) Also, keep in mind that there is no change in funding available

SHLB's next USF Congressional policy group call will reconvene on June 9, 2026 at 2:00 pm ET.

CHAT

2026-05-12 14:04:11 From to Everyone:

<https://www.benton.org/blog/house-advances-broadband-legislation>

2026-05-12 14:04:21 From to Everyone:

My strawberries were under a foot of snow a week ago.

2026-05-12 14:05:40 From to Everyone:

Agenda: In depth discussion about a number of broadband bills with Caroline Stratton of Benton Institute

Some Reminders for SHLB happenings: AnchorNets 2026!

Early bird registration is open

Webinar: Making Sense of the New E-Rate Bidding Portal

June 3, 2 pm ET - Register here

2026-05-12 14:13:27 From to Everyone:

If the permit is received after 60 days, is the infrastructure free?

2026-05-12 14:14:03 From to Everyone:

Replying to "If the permit is received after 60 days, is the in...":

Bad joke about Pizza Hut!

2026-05-12 14:14:26 From to Everyone:

Replying to "If the permit is received after 60 days, is the in...":

Oh my goodness!! 🤔

2026-05-12 14:18:44 From to Everyone:

Caroline - How do the requirement of S.4448 differ from the data disclosure requirements of the four CSV file required by the NTIA (which the NTIA has yet to release in final form)

2026-05-12 14:19:22 From to Everyone:

Would the map denote locations that weren't previously served but are now served by BEAD specifically?

2026-05-12 14:26:14 From to Everyone:

I hope they'll also publish the subscription price for the utilized broadband service, but I won't hold my breath. Seeing utilization data without expense data is only have the of the picture.

2026-05-12 14:29:08 From to Everyone:

What can you say about RDOF defaults (including pending defaults)? I know that Benton has written on this before.

2026-05-12 14:31:56 From to Everyone:

FCC info says defaults impacted 37% of locations. See https://www.benton.org/blog/new-dataset-reveals-impact-rdof-defaults-each-state?utm_campaign=Newsletters&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sendgrid

2026-05-12 14:33:08 From to Everyone:

<https://www.ntca.org/sites/default/files/documents/2026-05/bead-subgrantee-doc.pdf>

2026-05-12 14:36:02 From to Everyone:

What about state-level rate cap bills? Do BEAD projects get exempted?

2026-05-12 14:41:37 From to Everyone:

Fascinating

2026-05-12 14:42:50 From to Everyone:

Caroline - I would love to collaborate with Benton on some of the topics

2026-05-12 14:42:52 From to Everyone:

I'm so glad to hear that, Caroline! This is such important historical information to capture for future initiatives of this scale.

2026-05-12 14:43:09 From to Everyone:

<https://www.benton.org/blog/ntia-encourages-isps-ensure-state-bead-contracts-comply-agency-priorities>

<https://www.benton.org/blog/new-bill-aims-track-bead-progress>

<https://www.benton.org/blog/house-advances-broadband-legislation>

<https://www.benton.org/blog/rural-broadband-protection-act-meets-high-cost-program-crossroads>

2026-05-12 14:45:50 From to Everyone:

This was part of the short-form long-form process for RDOF (if I recall correctly)

2026-05-12 14:48:00 From to Everyone:

Caroline - What can you say about the "anatomy of RDOF defaults"? These is a long trajectory toward failure. Is there any way of tracking that?

2026-05-12 14:49:31 From to Everyone:

The parts that I have heard mentioned so far (of the NTIA 2 pager) are AR and TX broadband offices -- moves toward the permitting round table discussions, not much comment on the other parts..

2026-05-12 14:51:03 From to Everyone:

From PolicyBand: "Capito: President Trump on Monday signed a USF reform bill championed by Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) that would crack down on ISPs that fail to fulfill their broadband deployment promises. Under S. 98, the Rural Broadband Protection Act, the FCC would have 180 day to create rules design to closely vet ISP applicants for funds to deploy broadband in high-cost areas.

2026-05-12 14:52:00 From to Everyone:

In WI Charter/Spectrum's return of RDOF money primarily pointed to cost and timing issues of pole replacement.

2026-05-12 14:52:05 From to Everyone:

Thank you Caroline! So informative.

2026-05-12 14:52:16 From to Everyone:

Thanks, Caroline!

2026-05-12 14:52:34 From to Everyone:

AnchorNets 2026!

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