



SHLB Coalition USF Congressional Policy Meeting Notes

11.12.25

Action Items

- Kristen is outlining SHLB's priorities for its 2026 Policy Platform. Please review the Draft [USF Policy Platform outline](#) and share your thoughts/feedback by Nov. 21
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I. Giving Tuesday

- A. Giving Tuesday is December 2!
- B. Our [donation page](#) is live
 1. Some organizations also entertain an employee match.

II. AnchorNets

- A. Reminder: Please take our survey to let us know your feedback:
 1. [attendees](#) and [sponsors](#)
- B. Debrief Senator Sullivan/Lujan staff comments made during their [AnchorNets](#) plenary. You can watch the plenary [here](#).
 1. All of the other recorded plenaries are also available via the link above.
 2. We discussed the importance of E-Rate and RHC programs
 - a) Our goal is to continue to remain active with congressional members to showcase these programs and how important they are to communities.
 - b) These staffers discussed Alaska and New Mexico specifically and how community members would be disconnected without these programs. They are essential to providing telehealth, education, etc.
 3. Discussed the timeline of the USF Working Group
 - a) The Working Group has met since receiving stakeholder comments. They are reading through all of the comments (there are a lot of them).
 - (1) They have read SHLB's comments! 😊
 - b) They are looking to have regular meetings as there is a lot of reform that needs to happen
 - (1) What does Universal Service mean in modern life? Things have changed over 30 years.
 - (2) Not only analyzing connectivity, but how consumers are benefiting
 - c) Committed to having something that is workable by the end of the year or early next year
 - (1) JW: They weren't specific about the details of what this would be.

4. Stakeholder Participation with the Working Group
 - a) We asked about how else the group will continue to engage with stakeholders (beyond the initial comments).
 - b) They anticipate that the group will take meetings with stakeholders on certain points. Some comments are so vast, so they will likely reach out to also understand a group's priorities.
 - c) They still need to have internal meetings first to determine this process.
5. Contribution Reform
 - a) The starting point: How has the world changed and what services do consumers need today?
 - b) They want to analyze how people - including edge providers and consumers - are benefitting. Don't want the same people we are trying to connect to be the ones that are supporting the service
 - c) It comes down to a cost burden allocation decision. Determining where we are going to assess the fee to get a sustainable, predictable fund (levied on consumers, broadband providers, or those who are driving the traffic?). They all have downsides, and they all have challenges in terms of making them viable for decades. An appropriations model would be deliberated, but the current predicament we are in with the government shutdown is a good example of why it would not be a good option if we want a predictable fund
6. RHC Program Cap
 - a) This was an area of interest in SHLB's comments
 - b) The group will have to take a deliberate approach about what options are on the table. The FCC can raise the cap itself, so that could be an avenue. Part of the deliberation process; need to look at the data to see what the needs are.
 - c) Look forward to the discussion
7. Cybersecurity
 - a) They understood the need and demand for cybersecurity services
 - b) Having networks that are not secure creates vulnerabilities for students, patients. The Working group needs to look at this issue, especially to determine how the landscape has changed
 - c) In Alaska, the threat for rural providers is significant. Rural providers are less secure, given their strained budgets. This is something that should be considered for expansion of eligibility. Demand is a manifestation of federal mandates (like for HIPPA, electronic medical records). Has to be balanced against all eligibility arguments and the main focus (which is connectivity).
8. What is the overarching goal?
 - a) Looking at what other mechanisms can we build on with advances in technology.

- b) Making sure that the programs are benefitting who they are intended to
- 9. What can stakeholders do?
 - a) Make sure the real-world connectivity stories are brought to the staffers
- C. Questions/Comments:
 - 1. SHLB is working on the Fly-in for 2026 - we are currently finalizing dates.
 - 2. We are watching the current 5th Circuit challenge being brought by Consumers' Research that could implicate the RHC and E-Rate programs;
 - a) SHLB is working with its attorneys on intervening in the case

III. Senator Ernst BEAD draft [legislation](#)

- A. Formally codify the desire by some to claw back nondeployment BEAD money.
- B. We think that it is unlikely for this bill to pass based on conversations by hill staffers
- C. Wicker has a bill that does the opposite to ensure that the nondeployment funds are released.

IV. 2026 SHLB policy agenda

- A. Kristen has started [outlining our USF priorities](#)
 - 1. Each year, SHLB drafts a policy platform that we typically publish at the end of January. It is a high level document that presents all of our priorities for the next year.
 - 2. We have a specific section on USF and Kristen C. has started an outline
 - 3. This is an open document and you are more than welcome to provide any feedback for this outline (by Nov. 21 please).
 - 4. Once the official draft is put together, we will send that around for additional feedback

SHLB's next USF Congressional policy group call will reconvene on December 9, 2025 at 2:00 pm ET.

CHAT

2025-11-12 14:22:11 to Everyone:

SETDA/COSN Ed Tech Advocacy Day announced 4/30

2025-11-12 14:28:47 to Everyone:

Wicker's bill has more momentum than Ernst's, right?

2025-11-12 14:29:33 to Everyone:

Sen. Ernst is not running for her seat next year. One can speculate on why she is bothering to introduce this legislation.

2025-11-12 14:39:06 to Everyone:

I look forward to seeing this "something workable" by the end of the year from them!