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**Summer Webinar Series:**

# **Navigating E-Rate Federal Policy**

**July 2025**

# Agenda

- **Background**
- **Supreme Court Decision: Consumers' Research**
- **Congressional Review Act: E-Rate Hotspots**
- **Call to Action: Contact Congress!**
- **Solutions Outside of E-Rate**
- **Q & A**
- **Raffle: Swag Bag + Free 5G Hotspot**

# Today's Presenters



**Liz Gabbitas**

(she/her)

Founder

Libraries for Digital Equity

[libraries4de.org](http://libraries4de.org)



**Kristen Corra**

(she/her)

Policy Counsel

Schools, Health & Libraries

Broadband Coalition (SHLB)

[www.shlb.org](http://www.shlb.org)



**Mark Colwell**

(he/him)

Director of Broadband Operations

Mission Telecom

[www.missiontelecom.org](http://www.missiontelecom.org)



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# Background



# The Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB)



**SHLB**  
SCHOOLS, HEALTH & LIBRARIES  
BROADBAND COALITION

## Membership Organization

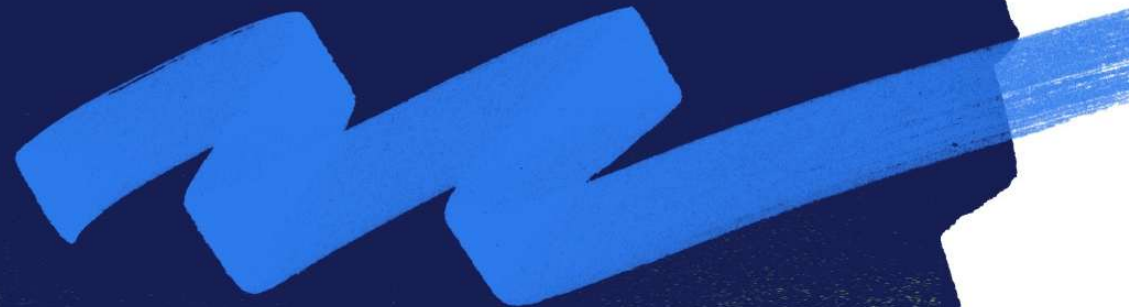
- Over 300 members
- CAls, public interest groups, for-profit companies, etc.

## Mission Driven

- Our goal is to promote access to reliable, affordable, multi-gigabit broadband to anchor institutions and their communities

## Broadband Advocacy and Education

- FCC, Congress, States



# The E-Rate Program

## The Universal Service Fund (USF)

- Established by the FCC; Stems from the Telecommunications Act of 1996
- Mission: *"make available for all people of the United States... a rapid, efficient, nationwide, and worldwide wire and radio communication service with adequate facilities at reasonable charges."*

## USF Programs

- High-Cost; Schools and Libraries (E-Rate); Lifeline; Rural Health Care

## E-Rate

- Provides funding discounts to help K-12 schools and libraries have affordable access to telecommunications and internet services
- Two eligible categories of service
  - Category 1 and Category 2
- Funding available is based on demand
  - 2025 Annual Cap: \$5.06 billion



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# Supreme Court Case



# ***FCC v. Consumers' Research: Is the USF's Contribution Mechanism Constitutional?***

## **Background**

- The USF collects contributions from telecom companies to support broadband and telecommunications access. This money funds programs like E-Rate.

## **The Legal Challenge**

- Consumers' Research claimed that the USF is unconstitutional
  - Public non-delegation – Did Congress provide guidance to the FCC?
  - Private non-delegation – Does the FCC oversee USAC?
- SHLB was a named party, advocating for USF constitutionality

## **The Outcome – USF Remains In Place!**

- 6-3 decision – The USF is constitutional
  - Congress provided FCC with an “intelligible principle”
- Continue to fund broadband for schools, libraries, healthcare clinics, and rural communities
- Future legal challenges?





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# Homework Gap

# Homework Gap

70%

Teachers Assign  
Homework that  
Requires Internet<sup>1</sup>

43%

Low-Income Households  
Without Home  
Broadband Subscription<sup>2</sup>

24%

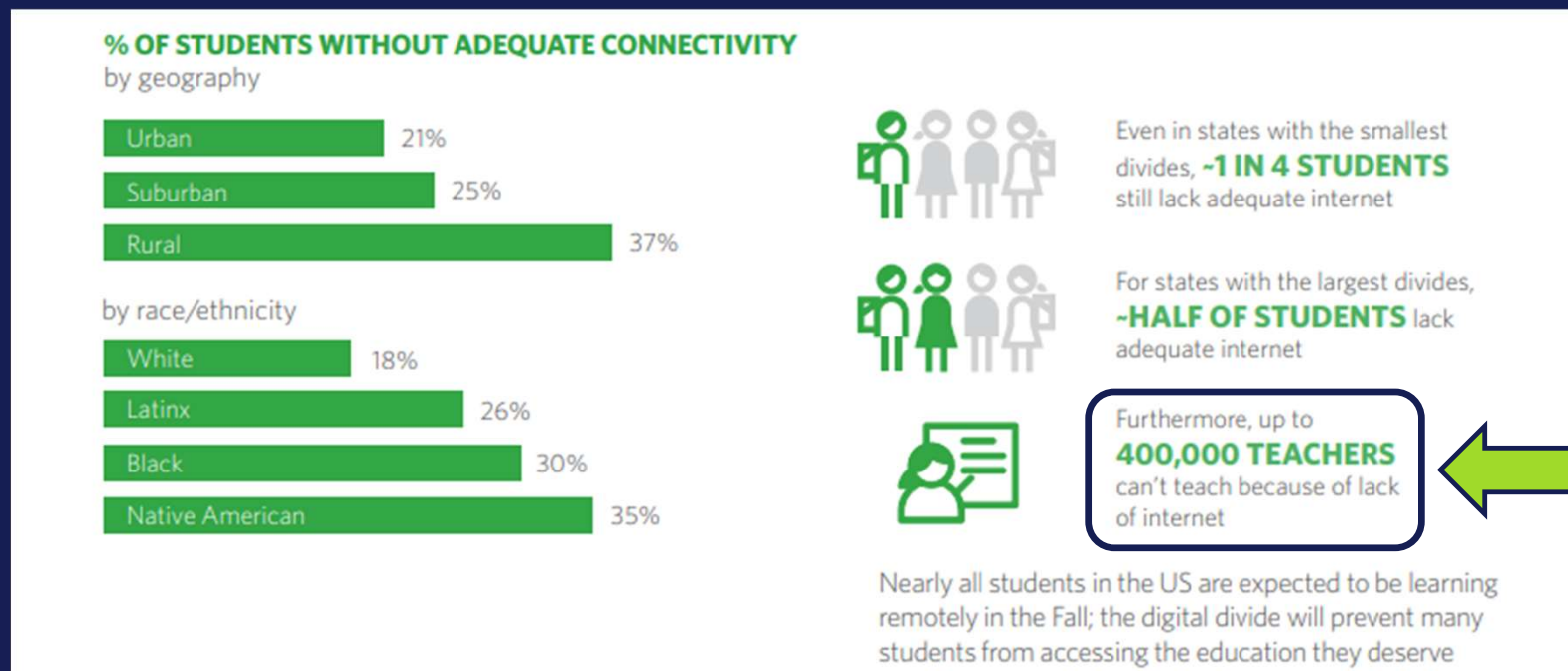
Students in Low-Income  
Households Cannot  
Complete Homework<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Education Association – “Equity in Digital Instruction: The Homework Gap” (2020)

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center – “Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet” (2024)

<sup>3</sup> Education Week – “The ‘Homework Gap’ Persists. Tech Equity Is One Big Reason Why” (2022)

# Digital Divide: K-12 Public Schools



<sup>4</sup> Common Sense Media – Closing the K-12 Digital Divide in the Age of Distance Learning. (2020)

# Congressional Review Act: E-Rate Hotspots

## Hotspot Lending Program

- FCC adopted this new program in 2024
- Funded by E-Rate (starting in funding year 2025)
- Various program rules/safeguards
- ~8,000 schools/libraries applied

## Current Risks

- Will Congress roll it back via Congressional resolution?
  - Extremely problematic – prevents FCC from proposing a similar program in the future
- Will the FCC roll it back instead?
- Legal challenge in the 5th Circuit?



# Call To Action: What Can You Do?

## Contact Congress!

- Tell members why hotspot lending is important – and why E-Rate funding is crucial to support these programs for your community
  - Visit <https://www.shlb.org/hotspot-program> for more information

## Lean Into Advocacy Opportunities – Your Voice Matters

- Gather data/stories in a formal way
- Know what you need and how to ask for it
- Participate however you can/are allowed
  - Sign-on letters
  - Fly-Ins and FCC/Hill meetings

## Stay Informed & Get Involved

- Organizations like SHLB provide membership opportunities, conferences, and free resources like webinars, newsletters



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# Options Outside of E-Rate

**Mission Telecom** is a nonprofit broadband provider  
and grantmaking foundation investing in a  
movement of systemic change



**Broadband Services**

We provide affordable, reliable, and secure access to the country's largest and fastest 5G network.



**Social Impact & Philanthropy**

We reinvest surpluses from our telecommunications spectrum resources in grant funding and impact investments.

# Empowering your mission. Enhancing your impact.

Our cutting-edge devices and services are tailored for **education institutions, libraries, nonprofits,** and **social welfare organizations.**





# Our Offerings



## Fixed Wireless Internet

Boost your organization with fast, reliable 5G internet, offering seamless connectivity without the need for cables.



## Mobile Hotspots

Stay connected on the go to what matters most with affordable, secure, and robust 4G and 5G mobile hotspots.



## Connected Transportation

Connect your bus, activity van, book mobile, or other transportation vehicle to blazing-fast 5G connectivity.



## Connected Laptops & Tablets

Ensure a seamless, secure, and high-speed connection on the go, eliminating reliance on public Wi-Fi or hotspots and minimizing connectivity interruptions.



## Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)

Easily switch your existing compatible devices to our premium, unlimited data plan. SIM cards and shipping are free. No activation fees required.



# E-Rate Cuts? We Are Stepping up.

Reliable, flexible, and mission-aligned connectivity for schools and libraries navigating the E-Rate program.

**65% OFF**

**Just \$84/year for service**

**Sign up by August 1 and get:**

- ✓ Unlimited 4G/5G wireless service on the nation's best network
- ✓ Dedicated account management to simplify line tracking
- ✓ Reliable wireless broadband
- ✓ Volume discounts available

**Need a device too?**

Ask us about 4G hotspots starting at \$58 or 5G hotspots starting at only \$183.

## Affordable Plans Purpose Built For You

[Get a Quote](#)

[Book an Appointment](#)





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# Key Takeaways



# Key Takeaways

- **The Digital Divide** is persistent, especially for students and even teachers
- **E-Rate funding** can help provide broadband access in your community
- **The Universal Service Fund** remains in place, funding E-Rate & other programs
- **The FCC's hotspot lending program** is at risk of being overturned by Congress
- **Elevate your voice.** Contact Congress or lean into advocacy opportunities where possible.
- **There may be solutions outside of E-Rate.** Mission Telecom is providing a special offer for schools and libraries





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**Q & A**

**Any Questions?**



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# Raffle

## Libraries 4 DE Swag Bag!



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**Grand Prize:**  
**Free 5G Hotspot +**  
**1 Year Service**

# Contact Us



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