Resolution to Ensure the Participation of County Governments in the Development and Implementation of Broadband Expansion Efforts

**Issue:** Members of the National Association of Counties (NACo) are uniquely positioned to advise and help facilitate digital connectivity for urban, rural, and tribal jurisdictions for which long-standing connectivity inequities have been made more acute by the COVID-19 pandemic. The expansion of broadband internet will require resources from all levels of government, but foremost will require the integration of local government in establishing the programmatic components that will successfully implement connectivity for all communities.

**Policy:** The National Association of Counties urges Congress and involved Federal agencies to commit to the inclusion and engagement of NACo members in the earliest phases of the strategic planning and expansion of broadband services and access.

**Approved | July 11, 2021**

Resolution Calling for The Federal Communications Commission to Address the Lack Of Cellular Phone Coverage For Unserved And Underserved Areas Of The United States

**Issue:** Many areas of the United States, particularly in rural areas, are either underserved or not served at all by cellular phone carriers preventing residents and visitors from accessing emergency services through E-911.

**Policy:** NACo urges the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to direct additional funding for the build-out of additional cellular communications capabilities in the unserved and underserved areas of the United States through the High Cost Program administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company.

**Approved | July 11, 2021**

Resolution in Support of Empowering Counties to Be Active in the Deployment and Operations of High-Speed Internet

**Issue:** High-speed internet is an essential element of modern commerce, but local governments in many states are prohibited from being active participants in the deployment of these services.

**Policy:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) supports the removal of barriers to counties supplying infrastructure to the private sector, partnering with the private sector or operating internet services as a public utility when no commercial service is available.

**Approved | July 11, 2021**

Resolution Encouraging Congress to Undertake a Systemic Rewrite of the Telecommunications Act of 1996
**Issue:** The Federal Telecommunications Act has not been updated by Congress since 1996. Since that time, there have been substantial changes in not only the telecommunications technology in use but also the manner it is used in daily life. The lack of congressional attention to this matter has placed an inordinate burden on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to set policy that is better suited to our elected representatives.

**Policy:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) believes that the time has come for Congress to engage in a systemic rewrite of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. We believe this action is necessary to realign the telecommunications policies of the United States to match current and developing technologies. Such a systemic review should occur periodically and in a timely manner.

Additionally, we believe that NACo can be a valuable resource during this process due to our unique relationship with this issue. NACo and its members are not only critical users of these telecommunications systems, elected representatives of the consumers of these systems, facilitators of deployment of these systems but also, in some states, regulators of these systems.

**Approved | July 11, 2021**

Resolution Encouraging Congress to Pass Legislation That Would Ensure Local 911 Service Fees Are Only Used for Emergency Communications

**Issue:** Funding for 911 comes from a variety of sources, including monthly fees that are set by the state and paid on consumers’ telephone bills. Yet this rate may vary by phone type within a state. As consumers shift their telecommunications preferences from wired to wireless phones, some states have seen a dramatic decrease in dedicated 911 funding as existing statutes have not been updated to account for these shifts. Subsequently, it is not uncommon for the revenue from 911 fees to fall short of the cost of running a 911 call center, also known as a public safety answering point (PSAP). Additionally, many states collect 911 fees and remit the revenues to local governments. However, in 2015 over $220 million in 911 fees were diverted by states throughout the country for purposes other than maintaining and upgrading PSAPs. As counties receive less in dedicated 911 revenue due to both states withholding funds and shifts in telecommunications preferences, they must turn to general fund money.

**Policy:** The National Association of Counties (NACo) encourages Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to adopt legislation or take regulatory action that ensures that fees collected for local 911 services are only used to repair, replace or improve 911 communications technology and services at our nation’s public safety answering points or call centers.

**Approved | July 11, 2021**

Resolution Encouraging Congress to Pass Legislation to Formalize the Process Through Which Data Gathered by the TestIT App is Used to Modify the Broadband Coverage Maps

**Issue:** The National Association of Counties (NACo), through efforts from NACo’s Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee and the Rural Action Caucus (RAC), is at the forefront of the issue of creating accurate broadband coverage maps. The current maps tend to inflate the availability of service across the nation but particularly in more rural areas. These maps are an important source document in the development of national broadband deployment policy and the deployment of
Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) encourages Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to create a formal process by which crowd-sourced data gathered by applications such as the TestIT app can be used to create new or update the existing FCC broadband coverage maps. Further, NACo believes that such legislation should require the FCC to test and certify the accuracy of these crowd-sourcing applications.

Approved | July 11, 2021

Resolution to Support Federal Solutions to the “Homework Gap”

Issue: Given the ever-increasing need for digital connectivity for children to successfully complete their schoolwork, the “homework gap” is leading to inequities in education in counties across America, which negatively impacts child development, the success of our economies and the quality of living in our communities.

Policy: To address internet affordability and adoption issues in K-12 education known as the “homework gap,” NACo urges Congress to establish a permanent program providing high quality, subsidized and discounted internet and computer access to low-income K-12 students through a shared cost formula spread between providers, families, and the federal government.

Approved | July 11, 2021

Resolution to Support a Permanent Federal Broadband Assistance Program

Issue: The digital divide disproportionately impacts low-income households, who, due to affordability issues, have lower rates of technology adoption and access to broadband internet at home. This disparity creates additional barriers to accessing public benefits, employment opportunities, digital learning, telehealth services and opportunities for civic engagement, negatively impacting county economies, health outcomes and quality of life.

Policy: NACo urges Congress to establish a permanent program that helps low-income families afford internet service. A permanent broadband benefit program must include measures holding Internet Service Providers accountable to increasing access and providing affordable service to qualifying households. Additionally, such a program should incorporate relevant data, best practices and any key policy lessons learned during the Federal Communications Commission’s implementation of the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program established under the American Rescue Plan Act.

Approved | July 11, 2021

Resolution Calling on Congress to Actively Engage Counties Prior to Developing 5G Wireless Infrastructure
Issue: As Congress works on legislation to help grow our nation’s wireless broadband infrastructure, it is imperative that they engage local leaders to ensure that new wireless infrastructure built on locally owned property is done so with the prior approval of the governing jurisdiction, and does not preempt or limit local zoning authority.

Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges Congress to work with local officials when drafting legislation that would encourage the use of state or county owned land, including public rights-of-way, to build new wireless infrastructure, including fifth (5G) wireless networks, to expand service to rural areas, or to promote digital equity. NACo has long advocated for universal access to reliable wireline and wireless high-speed broadband service – as crucial for education, employment, and economic development – and NACo further urges Congress to oppose any legislative or regulatory proposals that would limit or preempt local zoning authority or the ability of local governments to charge reasonable fees for the use of publicly owned land to build wireless infrastructure.

Approved | July 11, 2021

Interim Resolution on High-Speed Internet Parity

Issue: Technologies that are capable of delivering high speed internet are excluded from various Federal grant opportunities.

Policy: The National Association of Counties (NACo) urges the adaption of grant language that allows for the utilization of any and all technologies that meet then-current guidelines for high-speed internet speeds. NACo further urges the U.S. Congress to authorize grant funding based on high-speed internet access and reliability rather than utilizing a restrictive one-technology-fits-all approach for providing that service. The general term “High Speed Internet” should replace the technology-specific “Broadband” in legislation promoting ubiquitous internet access.

Approved | February 14, 2022