

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 3084

To amend the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 to establish the ReConnect program under that Act, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 30, 2025

Mr. MARSHALL (for himself and Mr. WELCH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

A BILL

To amend the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 to establish the ReConnect program under that Act, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “ReConnecting Rural
5 America Act of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. ACCESS TO BROADBAND TELECOMMUNICATIONS**
7 **SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 601 of the Rural Elec-
9 trification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb) is amended—

1 (1) by striking subsections (a) through (f) and
 2 inserting the following:

3 “(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to
 4 provide assistance in the form of grants, loans, and com-
 5 binations of grants and loans for the costs of the construc-
 6 tion, improvement, and acquisition of facilities and equip-
 7 ment for broadband service in rural areas.

8 “(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 “(1) BROADBAND SERVICE.—The term
 10 ‘broadband service’ means any technology identified
 11 by the Secretary as having the capacity to transmit
 12 data to enable a subscriber to the service to origi-
 13 nate and receive high-quality voice, data, graphics,
 14 and video.

15 “(2) RURAL AREA.—

16 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘rural area’
 17 means any area other than—

18 “(i) an area described in clause (i) or
 19 (ii) of section 343(a)(13)(A) of the Con-
 20 solidated Farm and Rural Development
 21 Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)(A)); and

22 “(ii) a city, town, or incorporated area
 23 that has a population of greater than
 24 20,000 inhabitants.

1 “(B) URBAN AREA GROWTH.—The Sec-
 2 retary may, by regulation only, consider an area
 3 described in section 343(a)(13)(F)(i)(I) of that
 4 Act to not be a rural area for purposes of this
 5 section.

6 “(C) EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN POPU-
 7 LATIONS.—The term ‘rural area’ does not in-
 8 clude any population described in subparagraph
 9 (H) or (I) of section 343(a)(13) of the Consoli-
 10 dated Farm and Rural Development Act (7
 11 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)).

12 “(c) GRANTS, LOANS, AND COMBINATIONS.—

13 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall make
 14 grants, loans, and combinations of grants and loans
 15 to eligible entities described in subsection (d) to pro-
 16 vide funds for the construction, improvement, or ac-
 17 quisition of facilities and equipment for the provision
 18 of broadband service in rural areas.

19 “(2) PROJECT ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible for
 20 a grant, loan, or grant and loan combination under
 21 paragraph (1), in addition to the requirements of
 22 subsection (d), the project that is the subject of the
 23 grant, loan, or grant and loan combination shall—

24 “(A) provide broadband service of at
 25 least—

1 “(i) a 100-Mbps downstream trans-
2 mission capacity; and

3 “(ii) a 100-Mbps upstream trans-
4 mission capacity; and

5 “(B) subject to paragraph (4), be carried
6 out in a proposed service territory in which at
7 least 75 percent of the households lack access
8 to broadband service of at least—

9 “(i) a 100-Mbps downstream trans-
10 mission capacity; and

11 “(ii) a 20-Mbps upstream trans-
12 mission capacity.

13 “(3) PRIORITY.—In making grants, loans, and
14 grant and loan combinations under paragraph (1),
15 the Secretary—

16 “(A) shall give priority to applications for
17 projects to provide broadband service in a pro-
18 posed service territory in which at least 90 per-
19 cent of households lack access to broadband
20 service of at least—

21 “(i) a 100-Mbps downstream trans-
22 mission capacity; and

23 “(ii) a 20-Mbps upstream trans-
24 mission capacity; and

1 “(B) may give priority to applications for
2 projects to provide broadband service—

3 “(i) in proposed service territories—

4 “(I) with a population of less
5 than 10,000 permanent residents;

6 “(II) that are experiencing out-
7 migration and have adopted a stra-
8 tegic community investment plan
9 under section 379H(d) of the Consoli-
10 dated Farm and Rural Development
11 Act (7 U.S.C. 2008v(d)) that includes
12 considerations for improving and ex-
13 panding broadband service;

14 “(III) with a high percentage of
15 low-income families or persons (as de-
16 fined in section 501(b) of the Housing
17 Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1471(b))); or

18 “(IV) that are isolated from
19 other significant population centers;

20 “(ii) that would provide rapid and ex-
21 panded deployment of fixed and mobile
22 broadband service on cropland and ranch-
23 land within the service territory for use in
24 various applications of precision agri-
25 culture; or

1 “(iii) submitted by an eligible entity
 2 that has provided broadband service or
 3 other utility service for not less than 5
 4 years in rural areas in the State in which
 5 the project would be carried out.

6 “(4) ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANT-
 7 ONLY AWARDS.—To be eligible for assistance under
 8 paragraph (1) in the form of a grant only, in addi-
 9 tion to the requirements of subsection (d)—

10 “(A) an entity shall be—

11 “(i) a Tribal organization (as defined
 12 in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determina-
 13 tion and Education Assistance Act (25
 14 U.S.C. 5304));

15 “(ii) a colonia;

16 “(iii) a persistent poverty county, as
 17 determined by the Secretary; or

18 “(iv) a socially vulnerable community,
 19 as determined by the Secretary; or

20 “(B) the project that is the subject of the
 21 grant shall be carried out in a proposed service
 22 territory in which at least 90 percent of house-
 23 holds lack access to broadband service of at
 24 least—

1 “(i) a 100-Mbps downstream trans-
2 mission capacity; and

3 “(ii) a 20-Mbps upstream trans-
4 mission capacity.

5 “(d) ELIGIBILITY.—

6 “(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—

7 “(A) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to ob-
8 tain a grant, loan, or grant and loan combina-
9 tion under subsection (c), an entity shall—

10 “(i) submit to the Secretary an appli-
11 cation at such time, in such manner, and
12 containing such information as the Sec-
13 retary may require;

14 “(ii) agree to complete buildout of the
15 broadband infrastructure described in the
16 application by not later than 5 years after
17 the initial date on which assistance under
18 subsection (c) is made available; and

19 “(iii) participate or agree to partici-
20 pate in—

21 “(I) the Lifeline program under
22 subpart E of part 54 of title 47, Code
23 of Federal Regulations (or any suc-
24 cessor regulation); or

1 “(II) any successor Federal inter-
2 net affordability assistance program.

3 “(B) INCLUSIONS.—An entity eligible to
4 obtain a grant, loan, or grant and loan com-
5 bination under subsection (c) may include—

6 “(i) a State or local government, in-
7 cluding any agency, subdivision, instru-
8 mentality, or political subdivision of a
9 State or local government;

10 “(ii) a territory or possession of the
11 United States;

12 “(iii) an Indian Tribe (as defined in
13 section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination
14 and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C.
15 5304));

16 “(iv) a cooperative or mutual organi-
17 zation;

18 “(v) an organization of 2 or more in-
19 corporated areas that have established an
20 intermunicipal legal agreement for the pur-
21 pose of delivering communication services
22 to residents;

23 “(vi) a corporation; and

24 “(vii) a limited liability company or
25 limited liability partnership.

“(C) INELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—An individual or legal general partnership that is formed with individuals shall not be eligible to obtain a grant, loan, or grant and loan combination under subsection (c).

“(D) LIMITATION.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity described in this paragraph that provides telecommunications or broadband service to at least 20 percent of the households in the United States may not receive an amount of funds under this section for a fiscal year in excess of 15 percent of the funds authorized and appropriated under subsection (i) for the fiscal year.

“(ii) STATES AND STATE AGENCIES AND INSTRUMENTALITIES.—A State or an agency or instrumentality of a State may not, in total, receive an amount of funds under this section for a fiscal year in excess of 15 percent of the funds authorized and appropriated under subsection (i) for the fiscal year.

“(E) PREVIOUS AWARDS.—An entity to which a grant, loan, or grant and loan combina-

tion is made under subsection (c) shall not use the grant, loan, or grant and loan combination to deploy broadband service in a service area in which broadband service is deployed by any other entity that has received a broadband grant or loan from the Rural Utilities Service, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the Department of the Treasury, the Federal Communications Commission, or a State broadband grant program, unless the service provided by the other entity does not provide to at least 75 percent of the households in the service area access to broadband service of at least—

“(i) a 100-Mbps downstream transmission capacity; and

“(ii) a 20-Mbps upstream transmission capacity.

“(2) EQUITY REQUIREMENTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may require an entity to provide a cost share in an amount not to exceed 25 percent of the amount of the grant (including the grant in a grant and loan combination) under subsection (c) requested in the application of the entity.

1 “(B) WAIVER.—The Secretary may waive
2 the cost share requirement under subparagraph
3 (A) for entities or projects described in sub-
4 section (c)(4).

5 “(3) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING.—

6 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may
7 provide to eligible entities described in para-
8 graph (1) that are applying for assistance
9 under this section for a project described in
10 subsection (c)(3)(A) technical assistance and
11 training—

12 “(i) to prepare reports and surveys
13 necessary to request grants, loans, and
14 grant and loan combinations under this
15 section for broadband deployment;

16 “(ii) to improve management, includ-
17 ing financial management, relating to the
18 proposed broadband deployment;

19 “(iii) to prepare applications for
20 grants, loans, and grant and loan combina-
21 tions under this section; or

22 “(iv) to assist with other areas of
23 need identified by the Secretary.

24 “(B) FUNDING.—Not less than 3 percent
25 and not more than 5 percent of amounts appro-

1 pried under subsection (i) to carry out this
 2 section for a fiscal year shall be used for tech-
 3 nical assistance and training under this para-
 4 graph.

5 “(e) BROADBAND SERVICE.—

6 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2),
 7 for purposes of this section, the minimum acceptable
 8 level of broadband service for a rural area shall be
 9 at least—

10 “(A) a 100-Mbps downstream transmission
 11 capacity; and

12 “(B) a 100-Mbps upstream transmission
 13 capacity.

14 “(2) ADJUSTMENTS.—At least once every 2
 15 years, the Secretary shall review, and may adjust
 16 through notice published in the Federal Register,
 17 the minimum acceptable level of broadband service
 18 established under paragraph (1) and broadband
 19 buildout requirements under paragraph (3) to en-
 20 sure that high-quality, cost-effective broadband serv-
 21 ice is provided to rural areas over time.

22 “(3) BROADBAND BUILDOUT REQUIREMENTS.—

23 “(A) DEFINITION OF BROADBAND BUILD-
 24 OUT REQUIREMENT.—In this paragraph, the
 25 term ‘broadband buildout requirement’ means

1 the level of internet service an applicant receiv-
 2 ing assistance under this section must agree, at
 3 the time the application is finalized, to provide
 4 for the duration of any project-related agree-
 5 ment between the applicant and the Depart-
 6 ment.

7 “(B) ESTABLISHMENT OF BROADBAND
 8 BUILDOUT REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary
 9 shall establish broadband buildout requirements
 10 that—

11 “(i) utilize the same metrics used to
 12 define the minimum acceptable level of
 13 broadband service under paragraph (1);
 14 and

15 “(ii) reasonably ensure—

16 “(I) the repayment of all loans;
 17 and

18 “(II) the financed network is
 19 technically capable of providing
 20 broadband service for the lifetime of
 21 any project-related agreement.

22 “(C) SUBSTITUTE SERVICE STANDARDS
 23 FOR UNIQUE SERVICE TERRITORIES.—

24 “(i) IN GENERAL.—If an applicant
 25 shows that it would be cost prohibitive to

1 meet the broadband buildout requirements
 2 established under this paragraph for the
 3 entirety of a proposed service territory due
 4 to the unique characteristics of the pro-
 5 posed service territory, the Secretary and
 6 the applicant may agree to utilize sub-
 7 stitute standards for any unserved portion
 8 of the project.

9 “(ii) REQUIREMENT.—Any substitute
 10 service standards described in clause (i)
 11 should continue to consider the best tech-
 12 nology available to meet the needs of the
 13 residents in the unserved area.”;

14 (2) by redesignating subsections (g), (h), and
 15 (i) as subsections (f), (g), and (h), respectively;

16 (3) in subsection (f) (as so redesignated)—

17 (A) in the subsection heading, by striking
 18 “LOANS AND LOAN GUARANTEES.—” and in-
 19 serting “LOANS.—”; and

20 (B) in paragraph (1)—

21 (i) in the matter preceding subpara-
 22 graph (A), by striking “or loan guar-
 23 antee”; and

24 (ii) in subparagraph (A)—

25 (I) by striking clause (ii);

1 (II) by striking “Secretary—” in
 2 the matter preceding clause (i) and all
 3 that follows through “in the case” in
 4 the matter preceding subclause (I) of
 5 clause (i) and inserting “Secretary in
 6 the case”; and

7 (III) by redesignating subclauses
 8 (I) and (II) as clauses (i) and (ii), re-
 9 spectively, and indenting appro-
 10 priately;

11 (4) in subsection (g) (as so redesignated), by
 12 striking “or loan guarantee” each place it appears;

13 (5) in subsection (h) (as so redesignated), in
 14 paragraph (1), by striking “1974)” and inserting
 15 “1974 (2 U.S.C. 661a))”; and

16 (6) by striking subsections (j) and (k) and in-
 17 serting the following:

18 “(i) FUNDING.—

19 “(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
 20 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-
 21 retary to carry out subsections (a) through (h)
 22 \$650,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through
 23 2030, to remain available until expended.

24 “(2) ADMINISTRATION.—Not more than 5 per-
 25 cent of the amounts made available under para-

1 graphs (1) and (3) shall be available to the Sec-
2 retary for the administration of subsections (a)
3 through (h).

4 “(3) DIRECT FUNDING.—

5 “(A) RESCISSION.—There is rescinded the
6 unobligated balance of amounts made available
7 to carry out section 779 of division A of the
8 Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (Public
9 Law 115–141; 132 Stat. 399).

10 “(B) DIRECT FUNDING.—On the day after
11 the execution of the rescission in subparagraph
12 (A), there is appropriated to the Secretary, out
13 of amounts in the Treasury not otherwise ap-
14 propriated, an amount equal to the amount re-
15 scinded in subparagraph (A), to carry out sub-
16 sections (a) through (h), to remain available
17 until expended.

18 “(j) ADDITIONAL RURAL BROADBAND PROGRAM
19 LOANS.—

20 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may provide
21 direct loans in accordance with the requirements
22 under this section, as in effect on the day before the
23 date of enactment of the ReConnecting Rural Amer-
24 ica Act of 2025.

1 “(2) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

2 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-
3 retary to carry out this subsection \$350,000,000 for
4 each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030, to remain
5 available until expended.

6 “(k) TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.—No grant, loan,
7 or grant and loan combination may be made under this
8 section after September 30, 2030.”.

9 (b) SUNSET.—Beginning on the date that is 120 days
10 after the date of enactment of this Act, section 779 of
11 division A of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018
12 (Public Law 115–141; 132 Stat. 399), shall have no force
13 or effect.

○