

Connecting America to the Future

Letter to the editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 07.13.23

When you think of infrastructure, what comes to mind? Crumbling bridges? Overcrowded interstate highway systems? A faltering electrical grid? How about internet connectivity?

Last month, the Biden administration announced the [largest internet funding](#) effort in America's history, the \$42.45 billion Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program, part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. North Carolina is one of 19 states where the Department of Commerce will invest over one billion dollars to provide high-speed internet service by the end of this decade. The program also includes provisions to limit internet costs, provide discounts on tablets, laptops, and desktop computers, community grants to improve skills to leverage new accessibility, and funding to extend broadband service into America's rural areas and tribal lands.

Currently, approximately [30 million Americans](#), including approximately [640,000 North Carolinians](#), struggle without broadband, or with poorly functioning internet connectivity. The COVID pandemic revealed the challenges faced by students, teachers, and working parents suddenly forced to rely on inadequate connectivity or to find Wi-Fi hotspots in parking lots to continue their education, do their work, or access telemedicine care.

Until we close the [digital divide](#) that has left so many Americans behind, we can never unlock our full potential. Broadband internet is vital to providing young people with the skills needed to lead productive lives and fill the jobs of tomorrow. It's essential to extend telemedicine to rural areas. It's pivotal in helping farmers leverage technology to improve profitability and to market their goods directly, and helping small businesses connect with customers and engage with business-to-business partners.

So, thank you, President Biden, for keeping your promises. We look forward to seeing our local Republican politicians at infrastructure initiative ribbon-cutting events despite the fact that they voted against everything that would actually make America "great."

Bob Bannerman
Supply