

## **ReConnecting Rural America Act**

### *Section 1. Short Title*

This section provides a short title for the bill, “Reconnecting Rural America Act of 2023.”

### *Section 2. Access to Broadband Telecommunications Services in Rural Areas*

Subsection (a) amends section 601 of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 by requiring that the Secretary make grants, loans, and grant and loan combinations for the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment for broadband service in rural areas. Eligible projects must provide broadband service of at least 100-Mbps/100-Mbps and be carried out in areas where at least 75 percent of the households lack access to broadband service of at least 100-Mbps/20-Mbps. The Secretary of Agriculture shall prioritize projects in areas where at least 90 percent of the households lack access to broadband service of at least 100-Mbps/20-Mbps and may prioritize certain broadband projects, including those in areas with less than 10,000 residents or are isolated from significant population centers.

Eligible entities include State and local governments, Tribes, corporations, organizations of two or more incorporated areas with an intermunicipal agreement to deliver communication services to residents, and cooperatives. Grant-only awards are limited to Tribal organizations, colonias, persistent poverty counties, and socially vulnerable community or projects in areas where at least 90 percent of the households lack access to broadband service of at least 100-Mbps/20-Mbps. This subsection limits the amount of funding per fiscal year received by a State or an entity that provides telecommunications or broadband services to at least 20 percent of households in the United States. This subsection also places restrictions on the use of assistance under this program to deploy broadband in areas where another entity is deploying broadband service using broadband grants and loans under other Federal or State programs. The Secretary may require that the eligible entity provide a 25 percent cost-share for grants.

This subsection sets the minimum acceptable level of broadband service for a rural area at 100-Mbps/100-Mbps and certain broadband buildout requirements and requires that the Secretary review both at least once every 2 years.

This subsection provides an authorization of appropriations of \$650 million for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028 for this program, and rescinds any unobligated amounts made available to carry out section 779 of division A of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 and appropriates an amount equal to that rescission for this program. This subsection also provides an authorization of appropriations of \$350 million for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028 for direct loans under section 601 of the Rural Electrification Act, as in effect before the date of enactment of this Act.

The authority to make any grants or loans under section 601 of the Rural Electrification Act would terminate on September 30, 2028.

Subsection (b) terminates the authority under section 779 of division A of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act.