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March 7, 2025



## NTCA Member Testifies on Broadband Deployment at House Hearing

Greg Hale, CEO of LTC Connect (Auburn, Ky.), **testified** Wednesday before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology on ways to ensure rural

Americans have access to affordable and reliable broadband services.

In his [testimony](#), Hale highlighted how the potential disruption of Universal Service Fund support could affect rural consumers, broadband investment and the viability of existing rural broadband networks. He also touched on ways to improve the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, a topic that was mentioned frequently throughout the hearing.

During his opening remarks, Rep. Richard Hudson (R-N.C.), the subcommittee's chairman, introduced the [Streamlining Program Efficiency and Expanding Deployment \(SPEED\) for BEAD Act](#), a bill he said would help remove regulations and get funds to states as quickly as possible. In addition, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick [released a statement](#) saying he would revamp the program "to take a tech-neutral approach that is rigorously driven by outcomes, so states can provide internet access for the lowest cost."

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## Flurry of Broadband Bills Introduced in Congress

Several broadband-related bills were introduced this week in both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

The [Broadband Grant Tax Treatment Act](#) was introduced in both chambers, led by Sens. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) and Mark Warner (D-Va.), and Reps. Mike Kelly (R-Pa.) and Jimmy Panetta (D-Calif.). If signed into law, the bill would promote greater broadband deployment by ending taxation of certain governmental broadband deployment grant funds. NTCA endorsed the legislation and [applauded](#) its introduction.

In the Senate, Sens. John Thune (R-S.D.), Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.) and John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) introduced the [Accelerating Broadband Permits Act](#). If approved, the legislation would improve federal agencies' review and

processing of broadband permits by removing regulations and ensuring applications are processed within 270 days.

Additionally, the House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce marked up and approved **a series of 10 bills** that focus on satellite connectivity, cybersecurity and other infrastructure-related topics. The bills now head to the full House for votes.

### **NTCA Urges Flexibility in Alaska Connect Fund Implementation**

In **reply comments** filed with the FCC, NTCA urged flexibility in implementing the Alaska Connect Fund (ACF) to accommodate the individualized needs of carriers serving Alaska.

NTCA also emphasized the importance of allowing new ACF rules to take effect before introducing additional changes and advocated for maintaining existing tribal engagement practices.

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### **Celebrating Women's History Month**

As we kick off the March celebration of Women's History Month, NTCA recognizes its own Women in Telecom (WIT) program, which was implemented at the 1990 annual meeting. WIT grew to include webinars, fly-ins, a mentorship program, special events, a 500+ membership and the WIT Advisory Council.

Chaired by Kristi Westbrook, CEO of Consolidated Telecommunications Co. (CTC; Brainerd, Minn.), the council provides strategic oversight and guidance for the program's initiatives.

Read the latest blogs from members of the council, written to share the group's insights, inspiration and industry perspectives:

- [Reshaping the Future of Our Industry With WIT](#)
- [There's Always One More Thing to Be Done: Why It Should Be Self-Care](#)
- [The Times They Are A-Changin'](#)

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NTCA will host a "USF Day of Action" on March 12 when member providers are encouraged to share the association's [public service announcement video](#) and other



#BroadbandBuiltToLast campaign resources on social media, in customer newsletters and on streaming platforms.

Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) was selected to serve as chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Communications, Media, and Broadband for the 119th Congress. NTCA CEO Shirley Bloomfield congratulated Fischer [in a statement](#), lauding her advocacy of the Universal Service Fund.

The FCC reminded consumers about [free resources](#) it offers to empower individuals to avoid scams and protect them from unwanted calls as part of National Consumer Protection Week.

# Outreach



NTCA Director of Government Affairs **Virdina Gibbs** gave a federal and regulatory update at the Louisiana Telecommunications Association Convention in New Orleans.



### **Member Moments: Bridging Other Digital Divides**

Esports programs in high schools can help encourage students to pursue career-enhancing technical education, but not all school systems can fund them. Shawnee Communications (Equality, Ill.) Sales and Marketing Manager Andy Henderson wrote about the provider's efforts to equip its local high schools with technology to help launch and maintain their own esports programs.

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# WEBINARS

Keeping you connected to the latest information for broadband providers.



## **Navigating the Bandwidth: Wellness Strategies to Master Work-Life Balance in Leadership**

Wednesday, March 19 | 2 p.m. ET

Join the Women in Telecom (WIT) program for an insightful webinar led by Executive Coach Kari Coffey, designed as a follow-up to the WIT at RTIME session. In today's hyper-connected world, maintaining work-life balance isn't just a challenge; it's essential for achieving professional and personal fulfillment. Whether you're reinforcing key takeaways from the conference or joining for the first time, this interactive workshop will provide actionable tools to living and leading with authenticity, purpose, and sustainable wellness.

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