



April 18, 2023

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of the undersigned organizations, we write in opposition to any legislation that would provide additional funding for middle-mile infrastructure. Legislation specific to middle-mile networks would waste the taxpayer's money by duplicating existing broadband infrastructure funding and fail to provide broadband access to unserved Americans.

AMERICAN COMMITMENT

AMERICANS
for TAX REFORM



There is already [up to \\$800 billion](#) in taxpayer funds available for a variety of broadband projects, including \$150 billion for state and local governments from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act; \$7 billion for various infrastructure initiatives, including broadband, in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021; \$350 billion for state and local governments with flexibility to use all or part of that money for infrastructure, including broadband, in the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA); \$42.5 billion to connect unserved Americans to broadband in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA); and ongoing programs in the Department of Agriculture and the Federal Communications Commission.



While middle-mile networks are used to carry data over long distances between local networks, also known as last mile networks, to other network service providers, and major telecommunications carriers, they do not connect the end user to the Internet. It is premature, and poor stewardship of taxpayer funds, to provide more funding that is limited to middle-mile networks when so much money for broadband deployment is already available. It is also unclear to what extent additional middle-mile infrastructure or funding would be needed to connect more unserved Americans to broadband, as the digital divide is largely a problem of “last-mile” connections.



Digital Liberty

We are concerned that middle-mile specific legislation would include provisions that mandate or encourage local governments and public utilities to enter an already competitive broadband marketplace using government funds to overbuild duplicative middle-mile broadband networks, especially when the definition of “middle mile” could be made so broad that it would enable overbuilding. Congress should work to prevent municipalities and utilities from using middle-mile programs to subsidize their entry into last-mile broadband provision.



LINCOLN
NETWORK

We also caution that government-funded middle-mile networks have historically become “networks to nowhere,” failing to improve connectivity and leaving taxpayers in debt. KentuckyWired is now four years behind schedule and its initial price tag of \$30 million has now [grown](#) to \$1.5 billion while, to date, failing to provide last-mile connectivity. Similarly, in Massachusetts, the middle-mile project MassBroadband 123 spent more than \$90 million in taxpayer funds before [going bankrupt](#) and failing to connect consumers.



At a time when [workforce](#) and [equipment shortages](#) and [supply-chain problems](#) are already affecting broadband deployments, it is paramount that



policymakers focus on connecting truly unserved Americans to last-mile broadband service using already available federal funds. Wasteful projects that duplicate existing networks, including middle-mile networks, detract from those efforts by straining these already-limited resources. Again, we urge you to oppose any legislation that provides funds specifically for middle-mile broadband networks.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Schatz
President
Council for Citizens Against Government Waste

Phil Kerpen
President
American Commitment

Grover Norquist
President
Americans for Tax Reform

Jeffrey Mazzella
President
Center for Individual Freedom

Jessica Melugin
Director, Center for Technology & Innovation
Competitive Enterprise Institute

Matthew Kandrach
President
Consumer Action for a Strong Economy

James Erwin
Executive Director
Digital Liberty

Evan Swartzauber
Senior Advisor
Lincoln Network

Pete Sepp
President
National Taxpayers Union

David Williams
President
Taxpayers Protection Alliance