

RCRC Reports President Trump Requests Additional Funding for Rural Programs

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The White House is requesting an additional \$117 billion in nondefense discretionary spending for the 2018 budget. The request includes funding for Federal Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and key programs for rural broadband, including the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) broadband mapping program and the Rural Utilities Service within the Department of Agriculture.

The official request asks Congress to increase funding for PILT by \$68 million. This additional funding will bring the total allocation to \$465 million, equivalent to funding levels enacted in the 2017 budget.

Inadequate mapping data for broadband access is a major barrier for policymakers when determining where to allocate federal funds based on which areas lack access to high-speed broadband. The outcome of this mapping project, if included in the final budget, will be critical in determining which areas will receive federal funds for rural broadband projects.

The White House is also requesting funds \$500 million for the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to invest in broadband deployment projects that would otherwise yield a negative cash flow for the service provider. The \$500 million will be administered in a combination of grants and loans and its allocation will be determined in large part by the outcome of the NTIA's mapping project. The allocation of \$500 million for RUS investment in rural broadband follows a report from USDA Secretary Perdue's Task Force on Rural Prosperity which found insufficient broadband is a major barrier for economic development in rural America. \$500 million would not make a dent in the estimated \$40 billion worth of investment required to close the digital divide.

Source: Rural County Representatives of California

<http://goldrushcam.com/sierrasuntimes/index.php/news/local-news/12875-rcrc-reports-president-trump-requests-additional-funding-for-rural-programs>