

## **Rural County Representatives of California Rural Broadband Update Says FCC Chairman Criticized for Not Investing More in Rural America**

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October 6, 2018 - Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune (R-South Dakota) held a hearing this week on the status of the digital divide. The discussion touched on the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) role to facilitate rural broadband deployment. Chairman Thune in particular found the FCC's efforts to close the digital divide lacking, and took FCC Chairman Ajit Pai to task for not investing more in rural America.

Witnesses criticized the FCC for continuing to rely on inaccurate mapping data of broadband coverage in rural areas. Grant Spellmeyer, vice president for federal affairs for U.S. Cellular, complained that the FCC's maps over-estimate internet coverage in rural areas across the U.S. Spellmeyer points out that if rural carriers make investments with inaccurate coverage information from the FCC, it will take years for carriers to find the funds to fix their networks. The FCC is frequently criticized for using inaccurate mapping data to determine rural America's underserved areas. Poor data leads to misappropriated funds that don't serve areas with the highest need for more broadband.

Committee members and witnesses both urged the FCC to invest more in rural broadband. Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Amy Klobuchar (D-Minnesota) agreed the state of the digital divide is unacceptable and that the FCC must engage more on this issue.

Source: Rural County Representatives of California

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