



Press Release

How Policymakers Can Help Bridge the Digital Divide in 2021

ALLISON EDWARDS | MARCH 17, 2021

Members of both parties in Congress have indicated a desire to reduce the “digital divide” — the disparity between those with reliable internet access and those without. The digital divide is a complex issue, however, and policymakers at all levels of government should be wary of overly prescriptive policies, argues AAF’s Director of Technology and Innovation Policy Jennifer Huddleston in a new analysis. Huddleston outlines potential policies that Congress, the Federal Communications Commission, and states can consider that target the myriad problems underlying the digital divide while promoting innovation and competition.

Her central points:

- Policymakers should target their solutions to the variety of problems preventing internet access: It would cost \$40 billion to reach the last 2 percent of households, access is not the same as connection, and myriad local issues present barriers to access and connectivity;
- While focusing on reforming existing programs, such as Lifeline, to ensure they are appropriately targeted and fiscally responsible, policymakers must also be cautious of attempting to impose a single or overly prescriptive solution and should instead look to leverage nuanced, on-the-ground knowledge; and
- State and local policymakers should play an important role in bridging the digital divide by removing barriers to deployment and developing solutions that fit the unique needs of their communities.

[Read the analysis.](#)