Press Release

Why the Federal Government Should Not Nationalize 5G

ALLISON EDWARDS | NOVEMBER 4, 2020

While 5G deployment by private companies is already underway in the United States, the Department of Defense — which holds crucial mid-band spectrum that can be used for 5G — is considering a national 5G network built by a single contractor. Such an effort by the government would both undermine current deployment efforts and be a marked shift from how the federal government has historically supported internet infrastructure, observes AAF’s Director of Technology and Innovation Policy Jennifer Huddleston. A nationalized approach to rolling out 5G would likely be slower and costlier than a market-based approach, Huddleston contends, and policymakers should instead support private deployment of 5G infrastructure by improving spectrum availability and utilization.

An excerpt:

Private sector companies are already engaged in providing 5G, and to shift to a government-run approach would have negative consequences. Any government effort would be well behind where private companies already are, leading to delays, at best, if 5G were to be nationalized. Further, a single-contractor approach is likely to be costly to taxpayers and would fail to achieve the same speed of deployment and increased connectivity that private investment would. As an example, Russia and other countries that took a centralized approach to rolling out 4G failed to achieve comparable results to the United States’ private-centric approach in the same timeframe.

Read the analysis.