

Press Release



Would A Federal Broadband Program Help Rural Areas? Analyzing Senator Warren's Proposal

ANDREW EVANS | AUGUST 15, 2019

Senator and presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren recently proposed a federal grant program to expand broadband Internet in rural areas — part of a broader plan to reinvigorate rural America. This kind of proposal is not new, however, notes AAF's Director of Technology and Innovation Policy William Rinehart, and past efforts have met with only limited success. The economics of rural areas makes extending broadband to areas without it challenging, he contends, and these areas need far more than just fast Internet to boost their economies.

An excerpt:

It is an open question whether broadband subsidies would indeed expand access in truly rural areas. There is a strong spatial component to broadband deployment, which [AAF's previous research](#) confirms. Micropolitan cores, which are rural population cores with between 10,000 and 50,000 people, already have broad access to broadband similar to metropolitan cores. But the surrounding areas tend to show marked differences in broadband availability. Access drops quickly the further you get from a population center. In other words, many rural towns tend to have good Internet access already, and it is in those population centers where the jobs are located.

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