Increase Broadband Access for Rural America

Access to Broadband is a Necessity

- Over 20 million Americans living in rural America -- or approximately one-third of the rural population -- do not have access to broadband.
- No broadband disadvantages rural Americans in many critical ways, including making the legal system less accessible.

Broadband Impact

- Every community across the nation needs high-speed internet access -- commonly referred to as broadband -- to be able to fully engage in today’s digital world.
- Broadband is defined by the Federal Communications Commission as a minimum of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download speed and 3 Mbps upload speed.
- This is the minimum speed needed to stream video or conduct normal business activities. The ABA recommends higher speeds.

Access to Justice

The unavailability of broadband reduces access to justice for rural America in numerous ways.

It deters new lawyers from setting up their practices in rural towns that desperately need them.

It makes it very difficult for lawyers to conduct business, including preparing legal documents, filing court papers, settling cases, and obtaining government services for their clients.

Tele-law options for serving residents with legal needs in distant communities that lack lawyers are not available.

Self-represented litigants are at a disadvantage for online research, legal forms, or self-help programs.

COVID-19 Pandemic

- Coronavirus has highlighted the urgent need for broadband for education, telemedicine, and access to justice.
- Congress already knows this and has recently provided an additional $125 million to help expand broadband access.

The Point

The Problem
Access to broadband has become one of the most critical infrastructure challenges of our time, just like electricity and roadways were in the past.

The Solution
Congress must provide leadership in assuring that there are sufficient financial incentives for internet providers to expand broadband access to rural America.

The Ask
We urge you to continue to make this a top priority for the country, and to include broadband access in any forthcoming infrastructure bill.