

COMMITTEE PRINT

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115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4881

To require the Federal Communications Commission to establish a task force for meeting the connectivity and technology needs of precision agriculture in the United States.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 25, 2018

Mr. LATTA (for himself and Mr. LOEBSACK) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To require the Federal Communications Commission to establish a task force for meeting the connectivity and technology needs of precision agriculture in the United States.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Precision Agriculture
5 Connectivity Act of 2018”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) Precision agriculture technologies and prac-
4 tices allow farmers to significantly increase crop
5 yields, eliminate overlap in operations, and reduce
6 inputs such as seed, fertilizer, pesticides, water, and
7 fuel.

8 (2) These technologies allow farmers to collect
9 data in real time about their fields, automate field
10 management, and maximize resources.

11 (3) Studies estimate that precision agriculture
12 technologies can reduce agricultural operation costs
13 by up to 25 dollars per acre and increase farm yields
14 by up to 70 percent by 2050.

15 (4) The critical cost savings and productivity
16 benefits of precision agriculture cannot be realized
17 without the availability of reliable broadband Inter-
18 net access service delivered to the agricultural land
19 of the United States.

20 (5) The deployment of broadband Internet ac-
21 cess service to unserved agricultural land is critical
22 to the United States economy and to the continued
23 leadership of the United States in global food pro-
24 duction.

25 (6) Despite the growing demand for broadband
26 Internet access service on agricultural land,

1 broadband Internet access service is not consistently
2 available where needed for agricultural operations.

3 (7) The Federal Communications Commission
4 has an important role to play in the deployment of
5 broadband Internet access service on unserved agri-
6 cultural land to promote precision agriculture.

7 **SEC. 3. TASK FORCE.**

8 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

9 (1) the term “broadband Internet access serv-
10 ice” means a mass-market retail service by wire or
11 radio that provides the capability to transmit data to
12 and receive data from all or substantially all Inter-
13 net endpoints, including any capabilities that are in-
14 cidental to and enable the operation of the commu-
15 nications service, but excluding dial-up Internet ac-
16 cess service. This term also encompasses any service
17 that the Commission finds to be providing a func-
18 tional equivalent of the service described in the pre-
19 vious sentence, or that is used to evade the protec-
20 tions set forth in this part;

21 (2) the term “Commission” means the Federal
22 Communications Commission;

23 (3) the term “Department” means the Depart-
24 ment of Agriculture;

1 (4) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary
2 of Agriculture; and

3 (5) the term “Task Force” means the Task
4 Force for Reviewing the Connectivity and Tech-
5 nology Needs of Precision Agriculture in the United
6 States established under subsection (b).

7 (b) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 1 year after
8 the date of enactment of this Act, the Commission shall
9 establish the Task Force for Reviewing the Connectivity
10 and Technology Needs of Precision Agriculture in the
11 United States.

12 (c) DUTIES.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Task Force shall con-
14 sult with the Secretary, or a designee of the Sec-
15 retary, and collaborate with public and private
16 stakeholders in the agriculture and technology fields
17 to—

18 (A) identify and measure current gaps in
19 the availability of broadband Internet access
20 service on agricultural land;

21 (B) develop policy recommendations to
22 promote the rapid, expanded deployment of
23 broadband Internet access service on unserved
24 agricultural land, with a goal of achieving reli-

1 able capabilities on 95 percent of agricultural
2 land in the United States by 2025;

3 (C) promote effective policy and regulatory
4 solutions that encourage the adoption of
5 broadband Internet access service on farms and
6 ranches and promote precision agriculture;

7 (D) recommend specific new rules or
8 amendments to existing rules of the Commis-
9 sion that the Commission should issue to
10 achieve the goals and purposes of the policy rec-
11 ommendations described in subparagraph (B);

12 (E) recommend specific steps that the
13 Commission should take to obtain reliable and
14 standardized data measurements of the avail-
15 ability of broadband Internet access service as
16 may be necessary to target funding support,
17 from future programs of the Commission dedi-
18 cated to the deployment of broadband Internet
19 access service, to unserved agricultural land in
20 need of broadband Internet access service; and

21 (F) recommend specific steps that the
22 Commission should consider to ensure that the
23 expertise of the Secretary and available farm
24 data are reflected in future programs of the
25 Commission dedicated to the infrastructure de-

1 ployment of broadband Internet access service
2 and to direct available funding to unserved ag-
3 ricultural land where needed.

4 (2) NO DUPLICATE DATA REPORTING.—In per-
5 forming the duties of the Commission under para-
6 graph (1), the Commission shall ensure that no pro-
7 vider of broadband Internet access service is re-
8 quired to report data to the Commission that is, on
9 the day before the date of enactment of this Act, re-
10 quired to be reported by the provider of broadband
11 Internet access service.

12 (3) HOLD HARMLESS.—The Task Force and
13 the Commission shall not interpret the phrase “fu-
14 ture programs of the Commission”, as used in sub-
15 paragraphs (E) and (F) of paragraph (1), to include
16 the universal service programs of the Commission
17 established under section 254 of the Communica-
18 tions Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 254).

19 (4) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary, or a des-
20 ignee of the Secretary, shall explain and make avail-
21 able to the Task Force the expertise, data mapping
22 information, and resources of the Department that
23 the Department uses to identify cropland, ranchland,
24 and other areas with agricultural operations that

1 may be helpful in developing the recommendations
2 required under paragraph (1).

3 (5) LIST OF AVAILABLE FEDERAL PROGRAMS
4 AND RESOURCES.—Not later than 180 days after
5 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary and
6 the Commission shall jointly submit to the Task
7 Force a list of all Federal programs or resources
8 available for the expansion of broadband Internet ac-
9 cess service on unserved agricultural land to assist
10 the Task Force in carrying out the duties of the
11 Task Force.

12 (d) MEMBERSHIP.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Task Force shall be—

14 (A) composed of not more than 15 voting
15 members who shall—

16 (i) be selected by the Chairman of the
17 Commission, in consultation with the Sec-
18 retary; and

19 (ii) include—

20 (I) agricultural producers rep-
21 resenting diverse geographic regions
22 and farm sizes, including owners and
23 operators of farms of less than 100
24 acres;

1 (II) an agricultural producer rep-
2 resenting tribal agriculture;

3 (III) Internet service providers,
4 including regional or rural fixed and
5 mobile broadband Internet access
6 service providers and telecommuni-
7 cations infrastructure providers;

8 (IV) representatives from the
9 electric cooperative industry;

10 (V) representatives from the sat-
11 ellite industry;

12 (VI) representatives from preci-
13 sion agriculture equipment manufac-
14 turers, including drone manufactur-
15 ers, manufacturers of autonomous ag-
16 ricultural machinery, and manufactur-
17 ers of farming robotics technologies;
18 and

19 (VII) representatives from State
20 and local governments; and

21 (B) fairly balanced in terms of tech-
22 nologies, points of view, and fields represented
23 on the Task Force.

24 (2) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT; VACANCIES.—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—A member of the Task
2 Force appointed under paragraph (1)(A) shall
3 serve for a single term of 2 years.

4 (B) VACANCIES.—Any vacancy in the Task
5 Force—

6 (i) shall not affect the powers of the
7 Task Force; and

8 (ii) shall be filled in the same manner
9 as the original appointment.

10 (3) EX-OFFICIO MEMBER.—The Secretary, or a
11 designee of the Secretary, shall serve as an ex-offi-
12 cio, nonvoting member of the Task Force.

13 (e) REPORTS.—Not later than 1 year after the date
14 on which the Commission establishes the Task Force, and
15 annually thereafter, the Task Force shall submit to the
16 Chairman of the Commission a report, which shall be
17 made public not later than 30 days after the date on which
18 the Chairman receives the report, that details—

19 (1) the status of fixed and mobile broadband
20 Internet access service coverage of agricultural land;

21 (2) the projected future connectivity needs of
22 agricultural operations, farmers, and ranchers; and

23 (3) the steps being taken to accurately measure
24 the availability of broadband Internet access service

1 on agricultural land and the limitations of current,
2 as of the date of the report, measurement processes.

3 (f) TERMINATION.—The Commission shall renew the
4 Task Force every 2 years until the Task Force terminates
5 on January 1, 2025.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to require the
Federal Communications Commission to establish a task
force for reviewing the connectivity and technology needs
of precision agriculture in the United States.”.