To direct the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to develop a National Strategy to Close the Digital Divide, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

M [introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To direct the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to develop a National Strategy to Close the Digital Divide, and for other purposes.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
3
4 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
5 This Act may be cited as the “Proper Leadership to
6 Align Networks for Broadband Act” or the “PLAN for
7 Broadband Act”.

April 21, 2023 (4:34 p.m.)
SEC. 2. NATIONAL STRATEGY TO CLOSE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE.

(a) In General.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary, in consultation with the heads of the covered agencies, shall develop and submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a National Strategy to Close the Digital Divide to—

(1) support better management of Federal broadband programs to deliver on the goal of providing high-speed, affordable broadband internet access service to all individuals in the United States;

(2) synchronize interagency coordination among covered agencies for Federal broadband programs;

(3) synchronize interagency coordination regarding the process for approving the grant of an easement, right of way, or lease to, in, over, or on a building or any other property owned by the Federal Government for the right to install, construct, modify, or maintain infrastructure with respect to broadband internet access service; and

(4) reduce barriers, lower costs, and ease administrative burdens for State, local, and Tribal governments to participate in Federal broadband programs.

(b) Required Contents.—The Strategy shall—
(1) list all—

(A) Federal broadband programs; and

(B) programs that exist at the State and local levels that are directly or indirectly intended to increase the deployment of, access to, the affordability of, or the adoption of broadband internet access service;

(2) describe current, as of the date on which the Strategy is submitted, Federal efforts to coordinate Federal broadband programs;

(3) identify gaps and limitations, including laws, that hinder, or may hinder, coordination across Federal broadband programs;

(4) establish clear roles and responsibilities for the heads of the covered agencies, as well as clear goals, objectives, and performance measures, for—

(A) the management of all Federal broadband programs; and

(B) interagency coordination efforts with respect to Federal broadband programs;

(5) address the cost of the Strategy, the sources and types of resources and investments needed to carry out the Strategy, and where those resources and investments should be targeted based on balancing risk reductions with costs;
(6) address factors that increase the costs and administrative burdens for State, local, and Tribal governments with respect to participation in Federal broadband programs;

(7) recommend incentives, legislative solutions, and administrative actions to help State, local, and Tribal governments more efficiently—

(A) distribute, and effectively administer, funding received from Federal broadband programs; and

(B) resolve conflicts with respect to the funding described in subparagraph (A);

(8) recommend incentives, legislative solutions, and administrative actions to—

(A) improve the coordination and management of Federal broadband programs; and

(B) eliminate duplication with respect to Federal broadband programs;

(9) describe current, as of the date on which the Strategy is submitted, efforts by covered agencies to streamline the process for granting access to an easement, right of way, or lease to, in, over, or on a building or any other property owned by the Federal Government for the right to install, con-
struct, modify, or maintain infrastructure with re-
spect to broadband internet access service;

(10) identify gaps and limitations with respect
to allowing regional, interstate, or cross-border eco-

momic development organizations to participate in
Federal broadband programs; and

(11) address specific issues relating to closing
the digital divide on Tribal lands.

(c) PUBLIC CONSULTATION.—In developing the
Strategy, the Assistant Secretary shall consult with—

(1) groups that represent consumers or the in-
terests of the public, including economically or so-

cially disadvantaged individuals;

(2) subject matter experts;

(3) providers of broadband internet access serv-

ice;

(4) Tribal entities; and

(5) State and local agencies and entities.

SEC. 3. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the
date on which the Assistant Secretary submits the Strat-

ey to the appropriate committees of Congress under sec-

tion 2(a), the Assistant Secretary shall develop and submit
to the appropriate committees of Congress an implementa-

tion plan for the Strategy.
(b) **REQUIRED CONTENTS.**—The Implementation Plan shall, at a minimum—

1. provide a plan for implementing the roles, responsibilities, goals, objectives, and performance measures for the management of Federal broadband programs and interagency coordination efforts identified in the Strategy;

2. provide a plan for holding the covered agencies accountable for the roles, responsibilities, goals, objectives, and performance measures identified in the Strategy;

3. describe the roles and responsibilities of the covered agencies, and the interagency mechanisms, to coordinate the implementation of the Strategy;

4. provide a plan for regular meetings among the heads of the covered agencies to coordinate the implementation of the Strategy and improve coordination among Federal broadband programs and for permitting processes for infrastructure with respect to broadband internet access service;

5. provide a plan for regular engagement with interested members of the public to evaluate Federal broadband programs, permitting processes for infrastructure with respect to broadband internet access service, and progress in implementing the Strategy;
(6) with respect to the awarding of Federal funds or subsidies to support the deployment of broadband internet access service, provide a plan for the adoption of—

(A) common data sets regarding those awards, including a requirement that covered agencies use the maps created under title VIII of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 641 et seq.); and

(B) applications regarding those awards, as described in section 903(e) of the ACCESS BROADBAND Act (47 U.S.C. 1307(e));

(7) provide a plan to monitor and reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in Federal broadband programs, including wasteful spending resulting from fragmented, overlapping, and unnecessarily duplicative programs;

(8) require consistent obligation and expenditure reporting by covered agencies for Federal broadband programs, which shall be consistent with section 903(c)(2) of the ACCESS BROADBAND Act (47 U.S.C. 1307(c)(2));

(9) provide a plan to increase awareness of, and participation and enrollment in, Federal broadband
programs relating to the affordability and adoption of broadband internet access service; and

(10) describe the administrative and legislative action that is necessary to carry out the Strategy.

(c) PUBLIC COMMENT.—Not later than 30 days after the date on which the Assistant Secretary submits the Strategy to the appropriate committees of Congress under section 2(a), the Assistant Secretary shall seek public comment regarding the development and implementation of the Implementation Plan.

SEC. 4. BRIEFINGS AND IMPLEMENTATION.

(a) BRIEFING.—Not later than 21 days after the date on which the Assistant Secretary submits the Implementation Plan to the appropriate committees of Congress under section 3(a), the Assistant Secretary, and appropriate representatives from the covered agencies involved in the formulation of the Strategy, shall provide a briefing on the implementation of the Strategy to the appropriate committees of Congress.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary shall—

(A) implement the Strategy in accordance with the terms of the Implementation Plan; and
(B) not later than 90 days after the date on which the Assistant Secretary begins to implement the Strategy, and not less frequently than once every 90 days thereafter until the date on which the Implementation Plan is fully implemented, brief the appropriate committees of Congress on the progress in implementing the Implementation Plan.

(2) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this subsection may be construed to affect the authority or jurisdiction of the Federal Communications Commission or confer upon the Assistant Secretary or any executive agency the power to direct the actions of the Federal Communications Commission, either directly or indirectly.

SEC. 5. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE STUDY AND REPORT.

(a) STUDY.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study that shall—

(1) examine the efficacy of the Strategy and the Implementation Plan in closing the digital divide; and

(2) make recommendations regarding how to improve the Strategy and the Implementation Plan.
(b) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date on which the Assistant Secretary submits the Implementation Plan to the appropriate committees of Congress under section 3(a), the Comptroller General shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the results of the study conducted under subsection (a).

SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—The term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(A) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives.

(2) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The term “Assistant Secretary” means the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information.

(3) COVERED AGENCIES.—The term “covered agencies” means—

(A) the Federal Communications Commission;

(B) the Department of Agriculture;

(C) the National Telecommunications and Information Administration;
(D) the Department of Health and Human Services;

(E) the Appalachian Regional Commission;

(F) the Delta Regional Authority;

(G) the Economic Development Administration;

(H) the Department of Education;

(I) the Department of the Treasury;

(J) the Department of Transportation;

(K) the Institute of Museum and Library Services;

(L) the Northern Border Regional Commission;

(M) the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and

(N) the Department of the Interior.

(4) Federal broadband program.—The term “Federal broadband program” means any program administered by a covered agency that is directly or indirectly intended to increase the deployment of, access to, the affordability of, or the adoption of broadband internet access service.

(5) Implementation plan.—The term “Implementation Plan” means the implementation plan developed under section 3(a).
1. (6) **STATE.**—The term “State” means each State of the United States, the District of Columbia, and each commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States.

2. (7) **STRATEGY.**—The term “Strategy” means the National Strategy to Close the Digital Divide developed under section 2(a).