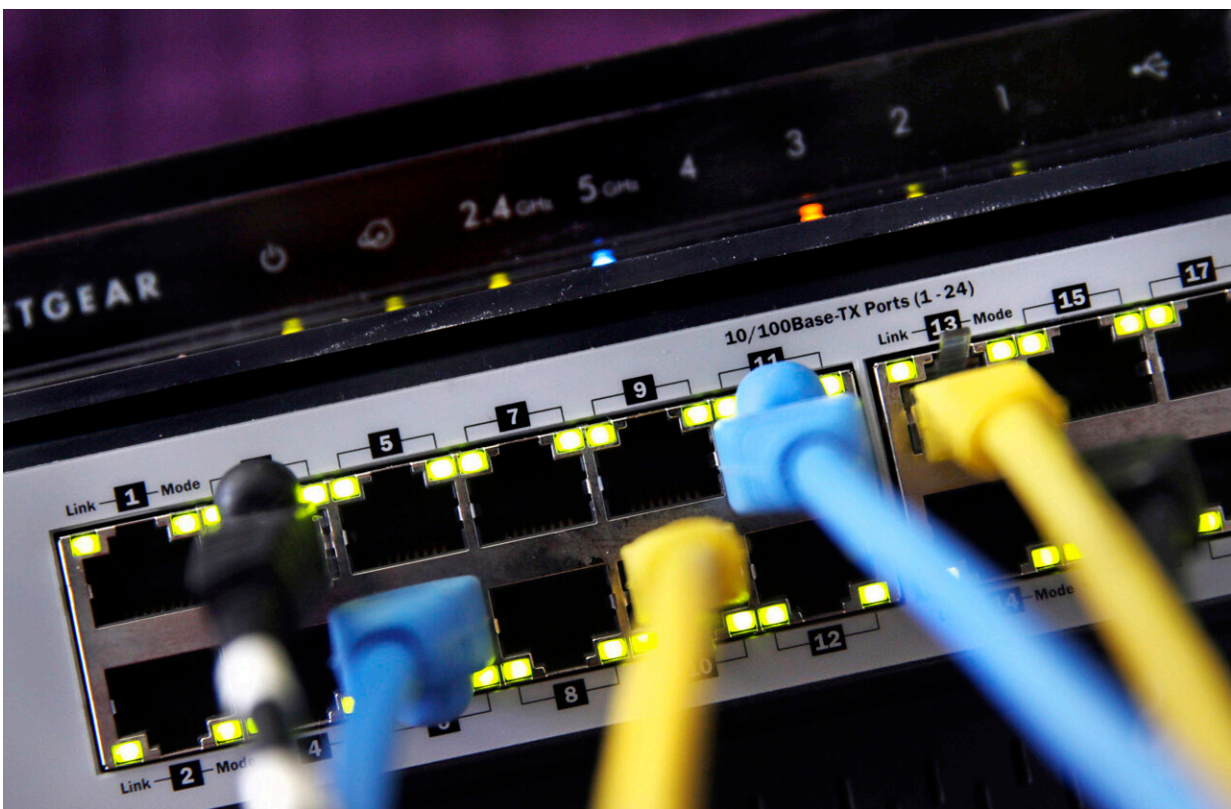


High-speed internet is a necessity, President Biden says, pledging all US will have access by 2030

June 26 2023, by KAVISH HARJAI and SEUNG MIN KIM



A router and internet switch are displayed in East Derry, N.H., June 19, 2018. President Joe Biden is expected to announce his administration's plans Monday, June 26, 2023, to distribute billions of dollars appropriated by Congress to bring the internet to every household and small business in the U.S. Credit: AP Photo/Charles Krupa, File

President Joe Biden on Monday said that high-speed internet is no longer a luxury but an "absolute necessity," as he pledged that every household in the nation would have access by 2030 using cables made in the U.S.

"These investments will help all Americans," he said. "We're not going to leave anyone behind."

Biden announced that more than \$40 billion would be distributed across the country to deliver high-speed internet in places where there's either no service, or service is too slow.

"But it's not enough to have access—you need affordability and access," the president said, adding that his administration is working with service providers to bring down costs on what is now a household utility—like water or gas—but often remains priced at a premium.

With Monday's announcement, the administration is launching the second phase of its "Investing in America" tour. The three-week blitz of speeches and events is designed to promote Biden's previous legislative wins on infrastructure, the economy and climate change going into a reelection year. The president and his advisers believe voters don't know enough about his policies heading into his 2024 reelection campaign and that more voters would back him once they learn more.

Biden's challenge is that investments in computer chips and major infrastructure projects such as rail tunnels can take a decade to come to fruition. That leaves much of the messaging focused on grants that will be spent over time, rather than completed projects.



President Joe Biden speaks during an event about high speed internet infrastructure, in the East Room of the White House, Monday, June 26, 2023, in Washington. Credit: AP Photo/Evan Vucci

The internet access funding amounts depended primarily on the number of unserved locations in each jurisdiction or those locations that lack access to internet download speeds of at least 25 megabits per second download and upload speeds of 3 Mbps. Download speeds involve retrieving information from the internet, including streaming movies and TV. Upload speeds determine how fast information travels from a computer to the internet, like sending emails or publishing photos online.

The funding includes more than \$1 billion each for 19 states, with remaining states falling below that threshold. Allotments range from

\$100.7 million for Washington, D.C., to \$3.3 billion for Texas.

Biden said more than 35,000 projects are already funded or underway to lay cable that provides internet access. Some of those are from \$25 billion in initial funding as part of the "American Rescue Plan."

"High-speed internet isn't a luxury anymore," he said. "It's become an absolute necessity."

More than 7% of the country falls in the underserved category, according to the Federal Communications Commission 's analysis.



President Joe Biden speaks to people after an event about high speed internet infrastructure, in the East Room of the White House, Monday, June 26, 2023, in Washington. Credit: AP Photo/Evan Vucci

Sen. Joe Manchin, who Biden called out as a "friend" during today's announcement, celebrated the \$1.2 billion West Virginia will receive to expand service in the rural, mountainous state of around 1.8 million.

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo joined Manchin at a press conference after Biden's announcement and said West Virginia's allotment would be enough money to "finally connect every resident."

"When I say everyone, I mean everyone," she said. Raimondo said the reason that hasn't happened in the past is because it's expensive to lay fiber in a rural or mountainous area.

"And so the internet providers haven't done it—it doesn't make economic sense for them," she said. "What we're saying to them now is, 'With this money, \$1.2 billion to connect about 300,000 folks in West Virginia, it is plenty of money to get to everyone.'"

Congress approved the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment program, along with several other internet expansion initiatives, through the infrastructure bill Biden signed in 2021.



Vice President Kamala Harris, President Joe Biden, and Jeff Say arrive for an event about high speed internet infrastructure, in the East Room of the White House, Monday, June 26, 2023, in Washington. Credit: AP Photo/Evan Vucci

Earlier this month, the Commerce Department [announced winners of middle mile grants](#), which will fund projects that build the midsection of the infrastructure necessary to extend internet access to every part of the country.

States have until the end of the year to submit proposals outlining how they plan to use that money, which won't begin to be distributed until those plans are approved. Once the Commerce Department signs off on those initial plans, states can award grants to telecommunications companies, electric cooperatives and other providers to expand internet

infrastructure.

Under the rules of the program, states must prioritize connecting predominantly unserved areas before bolstering service in underserved areas—which are those without access to internet speeds of 100 Mbps/20 Mbps—and in schools, libraries or other community institutions.

Hinging such a large investment on FCC data has been somewhat controversial. Members of Congress [pressed FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel](#) about inaccuracies they said would negatively impact rural states' allotments in particular, and state broadband officials were concerned about the short timeline to correct discrepancies in the first version of the map.

The second version of the map, which was released at the end of May and used for allotments, reflects the net addition of 1 million locations, updated data from internet service providers and the results of more than 3 million public challenges, Rosenworcel, who in the past has been a critic of how the FCC's maps were developed, [said in a May statement](#).

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