

HOTSPOTS Act One-Pager

- Americans have had to adjust to a new way of working, learning, and living from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. For most people, this change relies on high-speed broadband, but many rural Americans lack reliable connectivity.
- Addressing the broadband needs of rural America is largely a long-term infrastructure issue, but the current COVID-19 pandemic has made the short-term challenges imposed on businesses, families, and others from mandatory school closures and business interruptions even more acutely felt without reliable access to broadband.
- Local libraries are often the only source of free Wi-Fi in rural communities. Seniors, jobseekers, students, and many others rely on libraries for access to essential services online. During the pandemic, many libraries have continued offering these critical services, providing free Wi-Fi access to the public and mobile hotspots for patrons to check out and use at home.
- Hotspots and other Internet-connected devices are inexpensive, easily deployable, and can help address immediate connectivity needs while we continue to work to address longer-term challenges. Unfortunately, the past COVID relief bills have done little to address these immediate connectivity challenges.
- The process is simple. Hotspots and other devices are treated no differently than other items in the library's inventory, allowing users to check them out and libraries to track who has them and for how long, maintaining accountability and good governance while bringing connectivity to homes that otherwise would be lacking.
- That's why Senator Manchin and Senator Collins are reintroducing the HOTSPOTS Act to help libraries across rural America provide broadband hotspots to their communities and ensure Americans have access to the reliable broadband they need to work and learn from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The HOTSPOTS Act authorizes a 2-year, \$200 million pilot program with a minimum allotment of \$2 million per State to allow States, Tribes, and Territories to purchase and distribute Internet-connected devices and improve connectivity at libraries in low-income and rural areas.
- The HOTSPOTS Act is endorsed by the American Library Association (ALA); Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association (CTIA); the Competitive Carriers Association (CCA); and the Schools, Health, & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition.
- Senator Manchin and Senator Collins call for your support to help rural and low-income residents and close the digital divide.