

Making Wi-Fi on School Buses a Reality

Senators Udall, Gardner, Cortez Masto, and Whitehouse Introduce Bill Making Wi-Fi on School Buses Eligible for E-rate Reimbursement



ADEQUATE BROADBAND is an absolute necessity in this day and age for K through 12 students to complete their homework and succeed in school. Yet, too many students, especially rural and low-income students, don't have access to adequate broadband at home. And many spend long hours on the school bus each day getting to school or extracurricular activities like sports – with no internet access.

WE MUST close the “homework gap” and make sure these students have internet access on the bus. However, many schools – operating on already tight budgets – simply can't afford it.

SENATORS Tom Udall (D-NM), Cory Gardner (R-CO), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) have introduced legislation to make it easier for schools to put Wi-Fi on their buses. Their bill, S. 738, would require the Federal Communications Commission to make Wi-Fi on school buses reimbursable under the E-rate program.

E-RATE FUNDING is the Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund that supports connectivity in schools across the nation. This highly successful program provides discounts to schools and libraries to secure affordable telecommunications and broadband access.

THE IDEA for this bill was inspired by a New Mexico high school student. A few years ago, a football player from Hatch Valley High School in Hatch, New Mexico told Senator Udall how, after being on a bus for hours after a game, he would sit in the dark parking lot of his school doing his homework -- because he didn't have high-speed broadband at home. This same story is played out all over the country. We must close the digital divide for these students.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR of the School Superintendents Association, Daniel A. Domenech, says “When we think about efficiencies in federal policies, and common sense solutions that allow education system leaders to make small changes with big impacts: this is the type of policy we can support.”

GENERAL MANAGER of Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, Clyde Casciato, states that “Those living on the Navajo nation know firsthand that internet access is too often not available at home or in their community, making it nearly impossible for students to complete homework assignments and research projects. With this service, students can take advantage of otherwise lost hours on the school bus each day.”

AND President and CEO of the Competitive Carriers Association, Steven K. Berry, says “CCA supports this effort to ensure no student – urban or rural – is left behind in the digital world.”

ALL STUDENTS must have internet access to learn, succeed, and compete. S. 738 brings that goal closer to reality.