



When House Democrats released the *Moving Forward Act* (aka *INVEST in America Act*) to rebuild and modernize America’s infrastructure and create new, well-paying jobs for Americans impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, they included a special concern of Rep. Ben Ray Luján, D. N.M. — that of broadband access for rural and Tribal communities in New Mexico.

“... I’m proud to have secured several broadband initiatives that will help bridge the digital divide and address the disparities that rural and Tribal communities face. Ensuring that New Mexicans can access up-to-date public health and education resources during this pandemic is crucial,” Luján said.

The more than \$1.5 trillion package invests \$100 billion in broadband and includes Congressman Luján’s broadband legislation, the Broadband Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, to spur deployment of high-speed internet across the country through low-cost financing for communities. It also includes legislation he introduced to connect school buses to Wi-Fi to address the homework gap that rural and Tribal students face and initiatives he’s championed to establish grant programs to promote digital equity. Less than half of rural New Mexicans have access to fixed, high-speed broadband, which is crucial for public health, safety, and education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The legislative package spurs innovation by creating a pilot program at the National Laboratories to provide technical assistance to support the development of smart communities, and by establishing a \$100 million smart cities and communities demonstration program at the Department of Commerce.

## **Broadband included in Moving Forward Act**

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It also provides \$5 billion in total for the construction, modernization, and renovation of hospitals and outpatient health care facilities within the Indian Health Service, which has been at been on the front line of combating the COVID-19 pandemic in the hard-hit Navajo Nation.