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## O'Halleran, Johnson Offer Bill to Create Internet Device Pilot

Reps. Tom O'Halleran (D., Ariz.) and Bill Johnson (R., Ohio) have introduced a bill that would direct the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to establish a pilot program for public-private partnerships to provide refurbished Internet-capable devices to "individuals that do not have internet-capable devices" and to develop, with the FCC and stakeholder entities, best practices for reducing barriers to Internet adoption.

In approving applications to participate in the pilot, NTIA would consider whether the applicant has "the ability to establish or carry out one or more donation, lending, or purchasing programs that provide refurbished internet-capable devices to individuals in a county that the Assistant Secretary determines has a significant need for internet-capable devices."

The proposed Broadband Adoption and Opportunity Act calls for a five-year pilot program with a \$50 million budget for fiscal 2021. Entities participating in the pilot could include private-sector entities, nonprofit organizations, libraries, community anchor institutions, broadband Internet access service providers, and state or tribal agencies.

The best practices, which the bill directs to be completed within 18 months of enactment, would cover methods for increasing broadband adoption "among individuals (including individuals with disabilities) in different educational, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and age groups"; "informational strategies for individuals (including individuals with disabilities) in different educational, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and age groups that help such individuals identify, and understand how to qualify for, low-cost broadband internet access service programs"; methods for assisting libraries, community anchor institutions, or nonprofit organizations to establish or expand training programs for using Internet-capable devices to access services or accomplish tasks; and metrics for measuring broadband adoption.

Rep. O'Halleran, a member of the House Rural Broadband Caucus, said that the COVID-19 pandemic "has laid bare the fact that too many students in rural and tribal communities are not able to access the technology they need to complete their studies. This bill makes critical investments in students that need it most by capitalizing on public-private partnerships that work to connect kids with computers, tablets, and the devices they need to succeed."

Among the organizations issuing statements of support for the bill are the National Rural Education Association, NTCA, the Competitive Carriers Association, NCTA, the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, Public Knowledge, and Connected Nation. —Lynn Stanton, [lynn.stanton@wolterskluwer.com](mailto:lynn.stanton@wolterskluwer.com)

