



**INTERNATIONAL
BROTHERHOOD
OF ELECTRICAL
WORKERS®**

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KENNETH W. COOPER
International President

PAUL A. NOBLE
International
Secretary-Treasurer

May 9, 2025

VIA EMAIL

To: All Members of the United States House of Representatives

Re: Opposition to H.R. 1870, the “SPEED for BEAD Act”

Dear Representative:

On behalf of 860,000 active and retired members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), I write to oppose H.R. 1870, the “SPEED for BEAD Act,” which proposes to amend key provisions of the landmark Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program designed to bridge the country’s digital divide while also ensuring projects uphold high labor standards. This proposed legislation would allow funding of unreliable technologies and cause delays of **at least one year** for the estimated 32.1 million¹ Americans currently without reliable high-speed internet service, all while creating no infrastructure and few, if any, good-paying jobs.

IBEW members have vigorously championed ensuring all Americans can access affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband, particularly policies that expand access for rural and underserved communities. If H.R. 1870 becomes law, however, these efforts would be fundamentally undermined.

For example, the IBEW supports the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)’s assertion that fiber-optic technology is the gold standard for high-quality, scalable, and long-term broadband access.² Fiber-optic lines are the most resilient, sustainable, and efficient technology available to provide *reliable* broadband service. The IBEW is deeply concerned that H.R. 1870 would allow states to use BEAD program funds for inferior broadband technologies such as unlicensed fixed wireless and low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite broadband. Deploying either of these would undercut BEAD’s goal of providing *reliable* broadband service by providing an inferior technology.

Moreover, low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite broadband threatens not only the BEAD program but its enabling legislation, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)³, since low Earth orbit satellite broadband requires *zero*

¹ <https://www.digitalinclusion.org/blog/what-the-2022-american-community-survey-tells-us-about-digital-equity/>

² Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report “Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program: Issues and Considerations” June 15, 2023.

³ Pub. L. No. 117-58, 135 Stat. 1195



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infrastructure investment and produces minimal job growth. While the current BEAD program does permit the use of these alternate technologies in extremely high-cost areas where it is not feasible to deploy fiber, these inferior technologies should be the last resort.

It is important to note that the implementation of the BEAD program has been the subject of frustration, and the IBEW shares in some of that disappointment. However, it is critical to avoid rewriting the legislative history and bipartisan negotiations that led to the passage of the IIJA. The congressional negotiating group intended for the BEAD program to undergo a deliberate process at both the federal and local level following unsuccessful legislative efforts to achieve reliable broadband service.

Each of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, and the five territories participating in the BEAD program have already spent millions of taxpayer dollars developing plans for a BEAD rollout after input from thousands of constituents and stakeholders. The changes outlined in H.R. 1870 would result in unnecessary and wasteful duplication of work already completed, needlessly delaying implementation of the program by at least one year.

Given the lengthy process that BEAD has already suffered, it makes little sense to further delay its implementation in favor of another program that fails to ensure reliable broadband access, or produce the high-quality jobs American workers need. On behalf of the IBEW, I urge you to oppose H.R. 1870. If you have any questions, please contact Government Affairs Department Director Dean Warsh at (202) 728-6046 or via email to Dean_Warsh@IBEW.org.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Kenneth W. Cooper".

Kenneth W. Cooper
International President

KWC:mea