

# Wisconsin Veterans Chamber of Commerce



July 31, 2023

Dear Wisconsin Members of Congress,

We, at the Wisconsin Veterans Chamber of Commerce, understand deeply the unique challenges that our veteran community, alongside our wider society and economy, continues to grapple with in the aftermath of the recent pandemic. This challenging period has exposed significant gaps in broadband connectivity that disproportionately affect our rural communities, disadvantaged urban centers, and particularly our veteran families. In response to these concerns, we pen this letter to advocate for the continued funding of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a pivotal initiative administered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The ACP, a bipartisan initiative, has been instrumental in bridging the digital divide, providing internet services and devices to low-income Americans, including our veterans and their families. Currently, the program assists over 19 million households nationwide. Here in Wisconsin, almost 380,000 households are enrolled in the program, which represents 42.7% of eligible households. This significant uptake is a testament to the ACP's broad-based appeal and efficacy in our state.

For our veterans, the accessibility of affordable broadband has been more than a convenience; it has been a lifeline. Internet connectivity is not just about staying in touch with loved ones or accessing online entertainment. It means an opportunity for our veterans to access critical services, to pursue online education or remote job opportunities, and to maintain the social and professional connections so vital to their reintegration into civilian life. Moreover, for veterans dealing with health issues, including those related to their service, reliable internet access can mean the difference between easy access to telehealth services and challenging, sometimes prohibitive, travel to in-person appointments.

ACP funding is rapidly running out and if there is not additional funding added, the implications would be severe and far-reaching. Not only would nearly 20 million Americans face the risk of losing their digital lifeline, but Wisconsin's veterans and their families would also be disproportionately affected. The impact on rural communities, where the ACP has had a significant effect and where many veterans reside, would be particularly devastating.

Affordable broadband is a critical enabler for less affluent households, including many of our veteran families, facilitating the pursuit of the American dream. It is therefore of paramount importance that Congress allocates the necessary funds to ensure the continuity of the ACP. On behalf of the Wisconsin Veterans Chamber of Commerce, we strongly urge you to take the necessary steps to preserve this essential program.

Sincerely,

Saul Newton  
President & CEO

