



Digital Divide

Policy Position Statement:

The Florida League of Cities SUPPORTS legislation that reduces the digital divide and expands broadband internet access to all areas of the state. This includes:

- Identifying areas of Florida that are underserved by traditional broadband providers.
- Removing statutory barriers for cities to provide telecommunication services and open competition for affordable internet service.
- Increasing public funding for construction of broadband infrastructure.

Background:

Reliable and affordable access to the internet has become vitally important to Florida's municipalities and its citizens. Access to the internet is now part of our everyday lives and impacts economic development and the health, safety and welfare of our citizens. The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the lack of reliable connectivity throughout the state.

A lack of broadband mapping has made it unclear what areas of Florida are underserved or lack reliable and affordable internet access. Private companies will not invest in areas of our state where it is not profitable, causing a market failure, and municipalities have industry-driven and unnecessary statutory hurdles that must be overcome for them to be the broadband provider. For cities, a digital divide is a barrier to urban and economic revitalization and the full realization of a "smart city" vision. Universal access to affordable, reliable broadband cannot be achieved through deregulation and preemption of local authority but will require partnerships and robust and dedicated funding to accelerate universal broadband deployment.

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