



March 28, 2024

The Honorable Juan Carrillo
Assemblymember, 39th District
1021 O St, Room 4320, Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT FOR ASSEMBLY BILL 2221 - Streamlining Electric Utility Processing of Broadband Permits

Dear Assemblymember Carrillo,

The undersigned organizations support AB 2221. This bill ensures Californians will more quickly benefit from high-speed internet access, a vital resource essential for emergency response, tele-health, education, small businesses, job-creation, public safety, and economic resilience.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the severe need to expand broadband access across California. The pandemic dramatically changed our state's economic, educational, and business landscape. Californians' enhanced reliance on remote work, telehealth, and virtual learning demonstrate the need for legislation to accelerate the deployment of broadband infrastructure. Moreover, as our state continues to expand and enhance responsiveness to natural disasters and emergencies, we must embrace the expansion of this important infrastructure.

Even though local governments have to comply with timelines to approve or deny broadband permits, electric utilities have no requirements and typically take several months or over a year to process routine broadband related power design applications. These delays stifle economic growth and connectivity in our local communities.

In California, each public and private electric utility has its own process for approving or denying broadband applications. Some use the industry best practice of efficient application review which only takes a few weeks or a couple months. Unfortunately, many utilities take several months or over a year to review applications.

Billions in public and private funding for broadband projects are trying to be built as fast as possible in 2024, 2025 and 2026 to help close the digital divide and expand connectivity across our state. By the end of 2024, \$6 billion in federal broadband funding needs to be allocated and projects must to be built by the end of 2026 or we risk sending money back to D.C.

The legislature has enacted laws in recent years ensuring that local governments streamline broadband deployment and process broadband permits within 60 to 90 days. Electric utilities don't have any requirements for broadband application timelines and typically take between 7 to 12 months to process the initial power design application then another 7 to 12 months to connect power to the broadband project. California won't be able to meet its Broadband for All objectives unless legislation is passed creating a consistent and transparent process for public and private electric utilities to follow.

AB 2221 would require that broadband applicants and utilities work together to help close the digital divide and expand connectivity in communities across our state. The bill would:

- Require utilities to let the broadband applicant know if their design application is complete within a reasonable amount of time.
- Require utilities to use clearly identified and published design standards so applicants can submit complete applications.
- Require utilities to let the applicant know if their design application is accepted or denied within a reasonable amount of time.
- Require utilities to let the broadband applicant know why their design application was denied.
- If applicants don't fix incomplete applications within 30 days, then the application is cancelled.

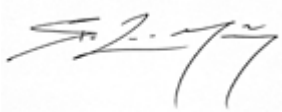
AB 2221 is critically important because it will help communities get connected to high-speed internet in months instead of years. Californians overwhelmingly support this kind of government efficiency. A recent report conducted by the Bay Area Council Economic Institute found that 75% of California voters support statewide streamlining of broadband projects.

We support AB 2221 because it will reduce delays and allow broadband project permits to move forward as quickly and efficiently as possible. In doing so, the bill will expand high-speed internet access to millions of Californians in months instead of years.

Sincerely,



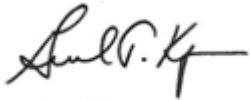
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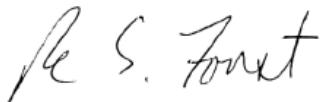
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