

# Sample Press Release

## Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) Funding Lapses, Leaving Millions of Rural Americans in Digital Limbo

**August 19, 2024** – The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a vital initiative providing affordable broadband access to millions of Americans, has officially run out of funding as of June 1, 2024. Despite the efforts of the House Energy and Commerce Committee in May 2024 to secure additional funding and expand the program's reach, the Congressional budget failed to allocate the necessary resources for its renewal, leaving millions uncertain about their future access to broadband support.

By the time the program ended, approximately 21 million Americans had benefited from the ACP, gaining access to high-speed internet and essential broadband services at a reduced cost.

A recent survey conducted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) involving 110,000 ACP participants revealed the program's critical impact, particularly in rural communities. The survey uncovered that 22 percent of all respondents had no internet access prior to enrolling in the ACP, a figure that rose to 25 percent among rural users. Additionally, 33 percent of all participants reported only having internet service intermittently, depending on when they could afford it. For rural users, 25 percent had never had internet access before the ACP due to prohibitive costs.

Many Americans have expressed worry about the program's loss. *"Ms. Ida Davis was thrilled to enroll in ACP and benefit from the \$30 off her internet bill, especially as she is on a fixed income. She was able to apply the discount to basic household needs like groceries. She uses high speed internet for online church services since she cannot attend in person due to health issues. She also uses it for online doctor visits and to stay in touch with family and friends. Ms. Davis was distressed to hear that ACP was not refunded and said she would participate in advocacy efforts to get it back.."*

According to Florida's Bishop Terry Hill, pastor of the Citadel Baptist Church in Jacksonville, FL, whose church members enrolled in the ACP program, "The ACP provided more than just access to social media; it was a lifeline for individuals in our church community." Rev. Dr. Jay Augustine, pastor of the historic St. Joseph's AME Church in Durham, NC, stated, "the ACP program enabled rural North Carolinians to stay connected with family and community, attend or schedule healthcare appointments, stay informed on current events, facilitated online education, job applications, and provided access to other critical government benefits."

With the program's cessation, over 21 million Americans now face a digital divide that threatens to sever them from these essential services—unless action is taken by elected representatives to restore this crucial support.

However, hope remains as faith communities and organizations rally to advocate for the ACP's renewal. The Skinner Leadership Institute, in partnership with Alabama, Florida, and North Carolina faith leaders will work together in a newly launched "**Stay Connected: Leverage for Digital Power**" campaign. The campaign will provide tips, tools, and resources to help those hit hardest by the loss of the ACP program to let their voices be heard by those who have the power to restore this crucial funding and continue to close the digital divide that has for too long adversely impacted rural communities.

For more information or to download the Stay Connected Toolkit, visit [SkinnerLeaders.org/getconnected](https://SkinnerLeaders.org/getconnected)