



U.S. Falling Behind in Broadband Penetration

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The United States Senate will be told Tuesday that the U.S. is barely above the midpoint of broadband deployment within developed nations – and it's getting worse.

ADVERTISEMENT The United States continues to slide in high-speed Internet rankings, dropping three places in six months to 15th out of 30 developed nations, according to a study authored by the international Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The U.S. placed fourth in 2001 in terms of the number of per-capita broadband subscribers, but fell to number twelve just six months ago. Now, the U.S. stands in fifteenth place. Denmark captured the top spot ahead of the Netherlands and Iceland. Korea, Canada, the United Kingdom, France and Japan all ranked ahead of the U.S.

Approximately 40 percent of U.S. households subscribe to broadband services, compared with 67 percent of those in Denmark. If the U.S. reached a 67 penetration rate, that would translate into an additional 33 million subscribers, the agency said.

The news prompted Ben Scott, director of policy for Free Press, to call for a national broadband policy. "We are failing to bring the benefits of broadband to all our citizens, and the consequences will resonate for generations," he said in a statement. "If we watch and wait, trusting that today's marketplace will magically solve the broadband problem ... the digital divide will widen."

Scott will appear Tuesday before the Senate Commerce Committee for a hearing on broadband and competitiveness in the U.S. Committee members will also hear testimony from the ConnectKentucky broadband initiative, the Telecommunications Industry Association, and Qualcomm, among others.

Sen. Hilary Clinton, D-N.Y., last month introduced a bill intended to speed broadband access to rural areas. It also would create a Rural Broadband Innovation fund to examine new broadband delivery technologies to reach underserved rural areas. It has been read twice and has been referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

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