

California legislature approves 'historic' broadband internet bill

Gov. Newsom is expected to sign the legislation

[Kim Lyons](#) Jul 17, 2021, 10:09am EDT



Illustration by Alex Castro / The Verge

California's legislature has voted unanimously to approve a \$6 billion plan to build a statewide open access fiber network (h/t [ArsTechnica](#)). The state will provide \$3.25 billion to hire a third party to build and maintain a so-called "middle-mile" network, which won't bring internet directly from backbone infrastructure to customers, but rather to connection points, leaving the last

mile to be handled by internet service providers (ISPs). The legislation provides \$2 billion for last-mile infrastructure lines to connect residences and businesses to local networks.

Making the middle-mile network open access will allow "non-discriminatory access to eligible entities on a technology and competitively neutral basis, regardless of whether the entity is privately or publicly owned," the bill states. The middle-mile plan prioritizes areas underserved by current internet options; areas with no residential access to download speeds of 25Mbps and upload speeds of 3Mbps would be targeted first.

Under the plan, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will "identify priority statewide open-access middle-mile broadband network locations, including areas that can be built expeditiously, areas with no known middle-mile network access, regions underserved by middle-mile networks, and regions without sufficient capacity to meet future middle-mile needs," according to the text of the legislation.

"Every Republican and Democrat in Sacramento just voted for a fiber for all future," Ernesto Falcon of the Electronic Frontier Foundation [tweeted Thursday](#).

Gov. Gavin Newsom called the bill "historic" for California. "This legislation will yield vital, broadened access for California families by prioritizing the unserved and underserved areas, facilities, households, and businesses that remain disconnected in the digital era," he said in a [statement](#) Monday. He's expected to sign the bill.