

White House launches internet access push

New spotlight shines on internet subsidy for families across the US

The President Biden Administration on Wednesday, June 14 launched a large-scale effort aiming to close digital divides across the country, specifically by promoting a [federal subsidy](#) that gives families up to \$30 per-month to pay for internet.

The [Online for All campaign](#) brings together a variety of partners to promote public awareness about digital access and its benefits, as well as the financial assistance available.

“Access to high-speed internet is no longer a luxury – it is a necessity to fully participate in today’s society,” states a White House fact sheet. “Still, many students and families go without high-speed internet because of the cost, while others are forced to cut back on other essentials to pay their monthly internet bill.”

The campaign launched Wednesday with the Affordable Connectivity Program Week of Action, including a “day of action” on Friday. The ACP, a pandemic relief measure, grants up to \$30 per-month to families toward their internet costs. For tribal members, the subsidy is up to \$75 per month.

So far, New Mexico has the seventh-best enrollment in the program among the U.S. states, with nearly 40 percent of eligible homes participating. However, that figure means more than half of eligible households are not making use of the assistance.

As part of the new push, the federal government:

has improved the ACP application to “make it easier for qualified applicants to enroll, including allowing Pell Grant recipients to apply without having to submit eligibility documentation.”

launched outreach grant programs with over \$73 million in funding to 229 awardees

will send a letter about the Affordable Connectivity Program to more than 3,300 public housing authorities across the nation to alert them and families they serve about the program.

Participating internet companies are promoting the subsidy when customers sign up for service. Some residents in Southern New Mexico have said they weren’t aware of the program or they’ve had trouble signing up. Spanish-speaking residents especially face hurdles in accessing the assistance.

The [newly launched campaign](#) refers to broadband internet as a “super social determinant of health,” meaning that access to high-speed internet – or lack thereof — has a real impact on health outcomes. Telehealth, digital health monitoring tools, online mental health services are among the things people can’t access without a fast, reliable internet connection. People can check their eligibility for the federal internet subsidy and sign-up at [GetInternet.gov](#).

The Southern New Mexico Journalism Collaborative has been reporting on the various ways residents of the southern half of the state are affected by slow or sometimes non-existent internet – as well as examining possible solutions to the problems.

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