

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

May 13, 2021

8:01 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Sara Hannan, Co-Chair  
Representative Calvin Schrage, Co-Chair  
Representative Josiah Patkotak, Vice Chair  
Representative Harriet Drummond  
Representative Mike Prax  
Representative Ken McCarty  
Representative Kevin McCabe

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 95 (STA)

"An Act relating to the right of first refusal of a volunteer search and rescue group with respect to obsolete or surplus state property."

- MOVED CSSB 95 (STA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13 (CRA)

Supporting broadband deployment in the state; recognizing the benefits of broadband; urging facilitation of broadband deployment; urging engagement with stakeholders; urging the development of a temporary centralized, technology-neutral broadband and Internet access working group in the state; urging the United States Congress to include broadband in 2021 federal infrastructure legislation; urging broadband providers to use savings from federal infrastructure legislation to provide broadband service at a reduced rate to the state and its political subdivisions; and urging the Alaska delegation in Congress to advocate for flexible broadband funding parameters.

- MOVED HCS CSSJR 13 (CRA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 95

SHORT TITLE: SEARCH AND RESCUE SURPLUS STATE PROPERTY

SPONSOR(s) : SENATOR(s) WILSON

03/03/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
03/03/21 (S) STA, FIN  
03/16/21 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
03/16/21 (S) Heard & Held  
03/16/21 (S) MINUTE(STA)  
03/30/21 (S) STA AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205  
03/30/21 (S) Moved CSSB 95(STA) Out of Committee  
03/30/21 (S) MINUTE(STA)  
03/31/21 (S) STA RPT CS (FORTHCOMING) 3DP 2NR  
03/31/21 (S) NR: SHOWER, REINBOLD  
03/31/21 (S) DP: KAWASAKI, COSTELLO, HOLLAND  
04/03/21 (S) STA CS RECEIVED NEW TITLE  
04/07/21 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532  
04/07/21 (S) Heard & Held  
04/07/21 (S) MINUTE(FIN)  
04/27/21 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532  
04/27/21 (S) Moved CSSB 95(STA) Out of Committee  
04/27/21 (S) MINUTE(FIN)  
04/28/21 (S) FIN RPT CS(STA) 7DP  
04/28/21 (S) DP: STEDMAN, BISHOP, HOFFMAN, WILSON,  
WIELECHOWSKI, OLSON, VON IMHOF  
05/03/21 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)  
05/03/21 (S) VERSION: CSSB 95(STA)  
05/04/21 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
05/04/21 (H) CRA, STA  
05/13/21 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

BILL: SJR 13

SHORT TITLE: IMPROVE BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS

SPONSOR(s) : COMMUNITY & REGIONAL AFFAIRS

04/14/21 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
04/14/21 (S) CRA, L&C  
04/22/21 (S) CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
04/22/21 (S) Moved CSSJR 13(CRA) Out of Committee  
04/22/21 (S) MINUTE(CRA)  
04/23/21 (S) CRA RPT CS 2DP 1NR NEW TITLE  
04/23/21 (S) DP: HUGHES, GRAY-JACKSON  
04/23/21 (S) NR: MYERS  
04/23/21 (S) L&C REFERRAL WAIVED  
04/26/21 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)  
04/26/21 (S) <Bill Hearing Canceled>  
05/03/21 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)  
05/03/21 (S) VERSION: CSSJR 13(CRA)  
05/04/21 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS

05/04/21 (H) CRA  
05/13/21 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

**WITNESS REGISTER**

SENATOR DAVID WILSON  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** As prime sponsor, presented CSSB 95 (STA).

RYAN JOHNSTON, Staff  
Representative Calvin Schrage  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Offered a summary of changes made under the proposed House committee substitute for CSSJR 13 (CRA), Version G.

DAWSON MANN, Staff  
Senator Shelley Hughes  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented SJR 13 on behalf of the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee, sponsor, on which Senator Hughes serves as chair.

CHRISTINE O'CONNOR  
Executive Director  
Alaska Telecom Association (ATA)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a PowerPoint presentation during the hearing on CSSJR 13 (CRA).

RYAN PONDER, Director  
Legal and Regulatory Affairs  
Matanuska Telephone Association  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SJR 13.

LESIL MCGUIRE, Consultant  
OneWeb  
No address provided

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SJR 13.

MARGE STONEKING, Alaska Advocacy Director  
AARP Alaska  
No address provided

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the goals of SJR 13.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:01:52 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR CALVIN SCHRAGE** called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. Representatives McCarty, Drummond, McCabe, Prax, Hannan, and Schrage were present at the call to order. Representative Patkotak arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**SB 95-SEARCH AND RESCUE SURPLUS STATE PROPERTY**

[8:02:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE announced that the first order of business would be CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 95(STA), "An Act relating to the right of first refusal of a volunteer search and rescue group with respect to obsolete or surplus state property."

[8:03:07 AM](#)

SENATOR DAVID WILSON, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented CSSB 95(STA), which he noted was a companion bill to HB 16. He said search and rescue groups are coordinated by the Alaska State Troopers and are vital to those in Alaska lost or needing help.

[8:04:24 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE opened public testimony on CSSB 95(STA). After ascertaining there was no one who wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[8:04:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTY opined that CSSB 95(STA) was a great idea.

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE concurred.

[8:05:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked if there were any differences in CSSB 95(STA) compared to the House companion bill.

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE offered his understanding that there are no differences from the House version other than HB 16 had an amendment "to strike the name."

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE determined that was "way less important than what the bill accomplishes." He added that he thought he agreed with CSSB 95(STA) and even wished "we could go further," because search and rescue groups need as much support as can be given for what they do.

[8:06:19 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN moved to report CSSB 95(STA) out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSSB 95(STA) was reported out of the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee.

**SJR 13-IMPROVE BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS**

[8:06:40 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE announced that the next order of business would be CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13(CRA), Supporting broadband deployment in the state; recognizing the benefits of broadband; urging facilitation of broadband deployment; urging engagement with stakeholders; urging the development of a temporary centralized, technology-neutral broadband and Internet access working group in the state; urging the United States Congress to include broadband in 2021 federal infrastructure legislation; urging broadband providers to use savings from federal infrastructure legislation to provide broadband service at a reduced rate to the state and its political subdivisions; and urging the Alaska delegation in Congress to advocate for flexible broadband funding parameters.

[8:06:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN moved to adopt the proposed House committee substitute (HCS) for CSSJR 13(CRA), Version 32-LS0756\G, Bullard/Klein, 5/10/21, as a work draft.

[8:07:13 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE objected for discussion purposes.

[8:07:25 AM](#)

RYAN JOHNSTON, Staff, Representative Calvin Schrage, Alaska State Legislature, offered a summary of changes made under the proposed HCS for CSSJR 13(CRA). The summary of changes is included in the committee packet and read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

**Page 2, Line 6 - 8 Add:** Whereas a strong broadband network across the state would provide the robust command and control infrastructure required for routine unmanned aircraft operations, such as cargo and medical supply delivery, to remote communities;

**Page 2, Line 16 - 17 Add:** Whereas quality broadband services are necessary for the support of Alaska research facilities and centers of higher education which are critical to the advancement of the state;

**Page 3, Line 30:** replaces Leon Morgan with James Cockrell as Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Public Safety in the recipients list on the resolution.

[8:08:28 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE removed his objection to the motion to adopt the proposed House committee substitute (HCS) for CSSJR 13(CRA), Version 32-LS0756\G, Bullard/Klein, 5/10/21, as a work draft. There being no further objection, Version G was before the committee.

[8:08:55 AM](#)

DAWSON MANN, Staff, Senator Shelley Hughes, Alaska State Legislature, presented SJR 13 on behalf of the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee, sponsor, on which Senator Hughes serves as chair. He presented the sponsor statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

It is well known that in many parts of the state, internet access is scarce at best. In regions such as the unorganized borough, the internet can be extremely limited, slow, and prohibitive in terms of cost. In order for these regions to grow and increase their autonomy, an economic base is fundamental. Alaska certainly faces unique challenges to keep up with the

rest of the developed world, considering that our communities are often separated by vast distances and geographical impediments. These facts, combined with winter weather, relatively low business demand in certain areas, and limited daylight hours half the year, are all challenges not only to the initial deployment of services, but to the ongoing operation and maintenance which can entail exorbitant costs.

As internet becomes more readily available in particular regions of the state, we see its benefits in education, healthcare, and commerce. Improved broadband in areas of Alaska where the capacity is now slow and limited could bring us similar benefits. Senate Joint Resolution 13 aims to address the issue of broadband access, speed, capacity, and affordability in the state by urging Congress to include the "information highway" in any forthcoming federal infrastructure legislation, just as roads, bridges, ports, and other projects essential for a functional and vibrant society are included.

Passage of SJR 13 would send a clear message that the legislature firmly supports broadband deployment in the state, recognizes the benefits of broadband, urges engagement with stakeholders throughout Alaska, and requests technology-neutral and flexible funding criteria in federal appropriation legislation to allow for Alaska's unique terrain and size.

MR. MANN brought attention to the "be it resolved" portion of the joint resolution, [which is found on page 2, line 18, through page 3, line 13, of the proposed HCS, Version G, and is the same as the "be it resolved" portion of CSSJR 13(CRA), which is found on page 2, line 13, through page 3, line 8, and which read as follows]:

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature supports widespread broadband deployment in the state and urges the Governor's administration to support broadband deployment through right-of-way access and by streamlining, consistent with state law, the authorization and environmental permitting and review processes required for the construction of broadband facilities; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the Governor's administration to

ensure that no unnecessary or burdensome fees, such as increased permit or right-of-way fees, consistent with state law, become barriers or roadblocks to broadband deployment; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the Governor's administration to engage with and seek input from all stakeholders, including broadband providers and consumers, in the state before making policy changes that affect broadband providers or consumers; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the Governor's administration to create a temporary centralized, technology-neutral broadband and Internet access working group to provide all Alaskans an equal seat at the table; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the United States Congress to include broadband, the "information highway," in 2021 federal infrastructure legislation, along with roads, bridges, ports, and other projects essential for a functional and vibrant society; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges broadband providers to use savings from federal infrastructure legislation that appropriates public funds for the installation or improvement of privately owned broadband infrastructure to provide broadband service at a reduced rate to the state and its political subdivisions; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the Alaska delegation in Congress to advocate for flexible broadband funding parameters given the unique challenges in the state.

MR. MANN concluded by noting where copies of the joint resolution would be sent [shown on page 3, lines 9-30 of CSSJR 13(CRA) and, with some additions, shown on page 3, lines 14, through page 4, line 4 of the proposed HCS, Version G].

[8:13:12 AM](#)

CHRISTINE O'CONNOR, Executive Director, Alaska Telecom Association (ATA), offered a PowerPoint presentation [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She directed attention to slide 2, which showed a list of ATA's members, Alaska-based companies that provide landlines, wireless, and broadband

service throughout Alaska. She noted that ATA was formed in 1949 and has been supporting its member companies ever since.

MS. O'CONNOR turned attention to slide 3, "New Last Mile," which she defined as the connection from the broadband provider to homes and businesses. As shown on the slide, she said approximately 60,000 locations had been upgraded or deployed in recent years. She gave examples of recent projects concluded: Alaska Communications brought high-speed Internet to 16,000 rural Alaska residents since 2017; Alaska Power & Telephone completed high-speed deployments in Interior and multiple locations in Southeast Alaska; Copper Valley Telecom completed a "fiber to the home" project in Tatitlek, Alaska; and GCI increased wireless speeds in Dillingham, Alaska, and surrounding communities. She said this is a small sample of the activity happening now.

MS. O'CONNOR showed slide 4, "New Middle Mile," and said both last mile and middle mile is necessary to provide Internet. She listed some middle mile projects. One was Alaska Power & Telephone constructing an undersea cable between Juneau, Haines, and Skagway, Alaska, and doubling the capacity of its microwave network between Juneau and Ketchikan, Alaska. The company was recently awarded a grant to run an undersea fiber between Juneau and Prince of Wales Island. Another example was Cordova Telecom extending its microwave network in Prince William Sound and recently being awarded a grant to extend a microwave network to Yakutat, Alaska. She said GCI added capacity to 42 microwave sites in Western Alaska and was awarded a grant to run undersea fiber to Unalaska. She relayed that KPU Telecom completed "Ketchikan 1," the first undersea connection to Canada. Matanuska Telephone Association constructed the "Alcan 1" project, which was the first terrestrial fiber connection from Alaska into Canada. Finally, she noted that Nushagak Cooperative completed a major extension of its microwave network. She pointed out that both the Matanuska Telephone Association and KPU projects provide new routes from Alaska to the Lower 48, which not only expands the capacity of the networks but also "provides important geographic diversity in case of disaster." She said there are still gaps, but they are being closed year by year.

[8:17:44 AM](#)

MS. O'CONNOR moved on to slide 5, which addresses the proposed legislation and the topics of rights of way, access, fees, engagement, and infrastructure. She stated that Alaska

broadband providers are "working at a furious pace to bring broadband to everyone." She said the proposed legislation correctly notes that ATA members have invested over \$1 billion in capital expenditures just since 2017. She acknowledged there is still much to do, and said the proposed legislation makes important recommendations that would help accelerate deployment through timely permit approval and reasonable fees; it urges continued access to rights of way and a streamlined permitting process; and it recognizes burdensome fees and surcharges hinder broadband deployment and urges the elimination of these barriers, which she said is critical.

MS. O'CONNOR said the proposed legislation also urges the governor's administration to seek input from broadband providers regarding policy changes, which she said is critical for this complex landscape. She noted that broadband providers are eager to share their expertise. She said ATA commends Governor Mike Dunleavy for the formation of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband. She said the proposed joint resolution urges Congress to recognize that broadband is infrastructure and the congressional delegation to support flexible funding mechanisms which recognize Alaska's unique circumstances. She said ATA supports these positions and offers its support.

[8:20:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked for confirmation that "the underlying goal of this is laying fiber optic cables from here to there."

MS. O'CONNOR said the simple answer is, "Yes, wherever possible." She said fiber optic cable provides "tremendous capacity and very fast speeds." She said in some parts of Alaska it has been too expensive to lay fiber optic cable; there are a lot of microwave networks, which also can provide highspeed broadband; however, she emphasized the goal is "to run fiber wherever possible."

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked how this would interface with efforts to establish a satellite system.

MS. O'CONNOR answered that ATA's networks already have satellite service embedded, as it is integral to service in many remote areas. She said she anticipates any upgraded satellite capacity to be integrated into the networks.

[8:22:30 AM](#)

MR. MANN pointed out that the proposed joint resolution is "100 percent technology neutral." It does not make a distinction between fiber optics and satellite; the term "broadband" refers to any Internet that is not dial-up. He emphasized the point in remaining neutral is that the intent of the joint resolution is to get Internet service to rural areas, not to choose winners and losers among Internet providers.

[8:23:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE noted that Ms. O'Connor had mentioned the middle mile and last mile, and he asked what the first mile is.

MS. O'CONNOR answered that that depends on the area and available technology. Connections can change from start to end.

[8:25:31 AM](#)

RYAN PONDER, Director, Legal and Regulatory Affairs, Matanuska Telephone Association, paraphrased his letter of support [included in the committee packet], which read as follows:

Matanuska Telephone Association, Inc. (MTA), supports Senate Joint Resolution 13 advocating for increased broadband deployment in the state to improve internet access.

Established in 1953, MTA is a 100 percent Alaskan locally owned and operated cooperative serving and supporting thousands of Alaskans. Headquartered in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, MTA focuses on providing and extending reliable broadband connectivity throughout its service area. Sometimes, it's not only terrestrial challenges that must be overcome, but also burdensome fees and cumbersome permitting processes. That's why SJR13 is so important and so timely.

If adopted and implemented, SJR13 will help MTA's member-owners stay connected to family, community, healthcare, education, employment, and commerce and will ensure this connectivity well into the future. SJR13 accurately portrays the essential lifeline that broadband has become for our society and encourages the removal of state-imposed right-of-way and permitting roadblocks; seeks broadband providers input before making policy changes; and calls upon the United States Congress to include broadband in the

2021 federal infrastructure legislation coupled with urging our Alaska delegation to advocate for flexible funding parameters.

The call to action outlined in SJR13 will assist in future proofing the way Alaskans stay connected. MTA supports SJR13.

[8:27:45 AM](#)

LESIL MCGUIRE, Consultant, OneWeb, testified in support of SJR 13. She stated that OneWeb is the first licensed, low earth orbit satellite constellation project. It is launching hundreds of satellites [worldwide] to connect to a network of ground stations. She explained that the goal is "to deliver resilient, high-speed, low latency, seamless broadband to the unconnected and under-connected people all across the globe." She added that OneWeb is beginning its services in Alaska first, then completing polar and Alaska coverage with its June 25 launch of 34 more satellites. She expressed OneWeb's appreciation of the sponsor. She said SJR 13 would make important findings about the effect an improved broadband infrastructure could have on Alaskans. Further, it identifies steps Congress can take toward infrastructure funding, urges the governor's office to seek input from broadband providers before making policy changes that impact those providers, and urges the Alaska delegation to advocate for flexible broadband funding parameters.

MS. MCGUIRE emphasized the important of "that middle mile" that has eluded so many in Alaska. She said, "It has been since 2019 that the legislature has weighed in on broadband policy in such a focused and deep manner, and much has changed in that time period." She said satellite projects, like OneWeb and others, now are bringing new means of connectivity. She said OneWeb appreciates the technology neutral approach taken in crafting SJR 13 and encourages the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee to pass the proposed joint resolution out of committee.

[8:30:36 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE opened public testimony on SJR 13.

[8:30:48 AM](#)

MARGE STONEKING, Alaska Advocacy Director, AARP Alaska, stated that AARP, as a nonpartisan/nonprofit organization advocating

for elders and their families, supports the goals of the proposed joint resolution. She stated, "Ubiquitous, affordable, reliable, highspeed Internet access can benefit all segments of our society, including seniors." Elders who have reliable broadband can age "in place" because they have access to telehealth, civic engagement, entrepreneurial pursuits, teleworking, social connection, educational opportunity, and vital assistance programs. She said older Alaskans have been falling increasingly behind in digital connectivity, which negatively effects their health and wellbeing. Poor broadband functionality not only leads to disconnection from social services and applications ("apps") that manage chronic conditions, but also leads to risk of social isolation, which has been linked to poor health outcomes, reduced quality of life, and premature death. For these reasons, she said, AARP urges passage of the proposed joint resolution.

MS. STONEKING recommended the next step be the creation of a state broadband office in the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED) or the Denali Commission, as recommended in "the 2019 blueprint." She said the Alaska Broadband Access Task Force previously served the purpose of bringing stakeholders together to set goals, and the Denali Commission updated the blueprint in 2019; however, no designated entity exists to oversee the implementation of the plan, to engage with both providers and consumers, and "to ensure equity and accountability in federal funding decisions." She listed recommendations for the focus of a dedicated broadband office that could help policy makers make informed decisions about reducing and ultimately eliminating "the digital divide in Alaska."

[8:33:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on SJR 13.

[SJR 13 was held over and taken up again later the same day at the call back to order following a recess to the call of the chair.]

[8:33:51 AM](#)

The House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was recessed to a call of the chair at 8:34 a.m.

[9:20:18 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee back to order at 9:20 a.m. Present at the call back to order were Representatives Prax, Patkotak, Drummond, Hannan, and Schrage.

**SJR 13-IMPROVE BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS**

[9:20:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR SCHRAGE announced that the final order of business would be a return to discussion of CS FOR SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 13(CRA), Supporting broadband deployment in the state; recognizing the benefits of broadband; urging facilitation of broadband deployment; urging engagement with stakeholders; urging the development of a temporary centralized, technology-neutral broadband and Internet access working group in the state; urging the United States Congress to include broadband in 2021 federal infrastructure legislation; urging broadband providers to use savings from federal infrastructure legislation to provide broadband service at a reduced rate to the state and its political subdivisions; and urging the Alaska delegation in Congress to advocate for flexible broadband funding parameters. [Before the committee, adopted as a work draft during the earlier portion of the meeting that day, was the proposed House committee substitute (HCS) for CSSJR 13(CRA), Version 32-LS0756\G, Bullard/Klein, 5/10/21 ("Version G").]

[9:21:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX recalled when the Rural Alaska Telephone Network ("RAT-Net") appeared in the 1970s, which changed culture in villages. He asked the committee to recognize "where we're going." He pointed out there is "kind of a scar up and down the Dalton Highway from a fiber optic installation that probably didn't have enough thought put into it." He said technology is wonderful, but he asked for recognition that "it is not the end-all and be-all."

[9:22:49 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN said while she is not debating or disagreeing with Representative Prax, she pointed to the global economy of the Twenty-First Century and its means to provide opportunity for people to work "from anywhere," if the infrastructure is provided. She suggested that providing Internet infrastructure would be more economical in the long term compared to

"transportation, water, and ... electricity." And although "we're going to still do those things," she said she thinks increasing Internet and broadband capacity throughout Alaska would change the economy of remote parts of the state faster. She stated, "The more Internet-capable we are, the better our economy can grow."

[9:25:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND shared that when schools switched to online learning because of COVID-19, she saw the huge disparity in schools' connectivity. She recognized that some communities do not have water, but pointed out that without Internet connectivity, [an artist or craftsperson] cannot reach out by Internet to sell his/her art, for example. She said health, education, and commerce rely on connectedness, and "the last thing we want to do ... is force villages to have to consider ... moving to urban Alaska." She added, "We need to bring these services to them." She mentioned there was a low-cost idea for bringing electricity across Western Alaska that did not gain traction. She opined, "We need to be open to these kinds of technologies." She expressed delight that Congress had named broadband a critical piece of infrastructure.

[9:28:24 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HANNAN moved to report [HCS CSSJR 13(CRA), Version 32-LS0756\G, Bullard/Klein, 5/10/21] out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, [HCS CSSJR 13(CRA)] was reported out of the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee.

[9:28:52 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:29 a.m.