

## **Newsom Signs Legislation Aimed at Closing California's Digital Divide, Expanding Internet Access for All**

*The bill, AB 537 (Quirk), will help fast-track the deployment of broadband in California by streamlining local approval processes and establishing best practices surrounding internet infrastructure projects.*

**Sacramento, CA** – This evening, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed AB 537 (Asm. Bill Quirk) that will help expand internet access for communities across California. The bill will ensure Californians will quickly benefit from high-speed internet projects by requiring local governments to approve or deny broadband permits within federally mandated timelines.

Right now, millions of Californians lack access to basic high-speed internet, stifling economic growth and disenfranchising low-income and rural communities. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Californians have transitioned to an economy that is dependent on remote work and an education system that revolves around virtual learning.

“The COVID-19 pandemic shined a bright light on California’s severe digital divide that has left too many of our children behind. Every Californian deserves access to affordable, high-speed internet,” said California Emerging Technology Fund President and CEO Sunne Wright McPeak. “We commend Assemblymember Bill Quirk for his leadership and applaud the Governor for signing this bill to authorize vital tools in helping expand internet access to our most vulnerable communities,” she continued.

“COVID-19 increased the need for internet in homes for distance learning, remote work, and telehealth access. Unfortunately, the pandemic highlighted the fact there are huge gaps in access to broadband,” said Assemblymember Bill Quirk (D-Hayward). “I was proud to author AB 537, because it will help expedite broadband deployment and provide internet access to more Californians. I am grateful to my colleagues in the Legislature and Governor Newsom for their support on this important bill.”

AB 537 widespread support, including endorsements from the Little Hoover Commission, the Bay Area Council, Greater Sacramento Economic Council, Los Angeles County Business Federation, and dozens of other advocacy groups demanding public policy solutions to close the state’s digital divide.