

# FRANKLIN COUNTY

REPLY TO:   
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
33 MARKET STREET, SUITE 203  
APALACHICOLA, FL 32320  
(850) 653-8861, EXT. 100  
(850) 653-4795 FAX



REPLY TO:   
PLANNING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT  
34 FORBES STREET, SUITE 1  
APALACHICOLA, FL 32320  
(850) 653-9783  
(850) 653-9799 FAX

**May 11, 2020**

**U.S. Senator Rick Scott  
111 N. Adams Street, Suite 208  
Tallahassee, FL 32301**

Re: Rural Broadband

Dear U.S. Senator Rick Scott,

We truly appreciate you being a consistent and strong advocate for rural communities throughout your years in public service. Recent studies have shown the existence of an internet gap throughout Florida. Statistics show that 80 percent of the 24 million American households that do not have reliable, affordable high-speed internet are in rural areas. Rural and Tribal areas continue to lag behind urban areas in mobile broadband deployment.

Bringing access to broadband in our rural area of Franklin County is important now more than ever. Not only would this benefit all residents of Franklin County who have been deprived of this basic necessity, but also it would also allow school children to have access to the tools that will make them contributing citizens in the future, enhance values, and also stimulate economic development in this Historic area. Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, unemployment has surged and schools have closed leaving families to rely on internet connectivity to work, learn from home, search for employment, and access telehealth services. The pandemic has exposed the high costs to families who are unable to participate in the digital age.

The public health crisis has made it imperative that the families who are unable to access even a minimum level of broadband service are not left behind by the digital divide. It can not be emphasized enough how important affordable high speed broadband is to the education of Franklin Counties student population. Education is the largest component of our local communities budget and depriving our young people of this valuable tool will preclude them from reaching their potential in our ever more technological world. Now is the time to take those actions that will get us from where we are to where we need to be so we can come out of this stronger and better prepared.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Noah Lockley, Jr.".

Noah Lockley, Jr.  
Chairman, Franklin County  
Board of County Commissioners

**RICKY D. JONES  
DISTRICT ONE**

**BERT BOLDT  
DISTRICT TWO**

**NOAH LOCKLEY, JR.  
DISTRICT THREE**

**JOSEPH PARRISH  
DISTRICT FOUR**

**WILLIAM MASSEY  
DISTRICT FIVE**