



Dear Senator Padilla,

The Veterans and Military Families Caucus supports your legislation **SB 43 - Utility Easements for Broadband and SB 45 – Broadband Infrastructure**.

Broadband expansion in New Mexico is a critical issue for veterans and military families around the state and especially in rural areas. The 2023 Veterans Profile states that there were **139,347 veterans living in New Mexico as of 2021**.

Veterans represented **8.6 percent of the civilian population 18 and older** in our state.

Add to that the number of active duty military families in our state, National Guard families, and retired military and veteran family members that also need reliable broadband to do critical functions of daily life such as schoolwork, job applications and work from home, telehealth, connecting with family, and even online shopping for groceries.

#VetResources, a weekly newsletter for Veterans, their Families, Caregivers, and Survivors, states that: “The **expansion of virtual care is providing substantial impacts for Veterans** across the country. Last year, VA delivered **more telehealth care** to more Veterans than in any previous year. Veterans can make VA appointments, find their health records, send messages to their VA providers, and manage their VA prescriptions on My HealtheVet, **VA’s online patient portal.**”

The VMFC Caucus has supported broadband expansion in the past few years and will continue to do so. Please **share this letter of support with your colleagues** in committees as you advance the legislation.

If you have any questions about how this legislation benefits us or how we can support your efforts in this regard, please contact us.

Respectfully,



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