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The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on Wednesday released a report showing the number of Americans with access to high-speed broadband has increased in recent years, figures that were dismissed by the commission's two Democrats and outside consumer groups who say the FCC's data-collection practices are too faulty to yield substantive conclusions.



According to the agency's broadband deployment report, the number of U.S. residents without access to a high-speed broadband connection decreased by more than 18 percent between 2017 and 2018. The FCC said 4.3 million of those who gained broadband access live in rural settings. The two

Democratic commissioners at the FCC issued dissenting statements, saying it was fraudulent to claim that broadband is being deployed in a "reasonable and timely" manner. "This report deserves a failing grade," **Democratic Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel said.** "It concludes that broadband deployment is reasonable and timely throughout the United States. This will come as news to millions and millions of Americans who lack access to high-speed service at home."

The FCC's annual broadband deployment report has been surrounded by controversy for some time, particularly after the commission was forced to revise a draft earlier this year that overestimated the number of Americans receiving high-speed broadband. The draft, circulated within the FCC, included faulty data from one company, Barrier Free, which erroneously stated it was serving millions more people than it actually was. Watchdog group Free Press outlined in a filing how Barrier Free's inflated figures led to errors in the FCC's draft report, and the commission said they would fix the data after receiving revised numbers from the company. Democratic Commissioner Geoffrey Starks, in his dissenting opinion, sharply criticized the FCC for its handling of the Barrier Free data. "The facts surrounding Barrier Free's erroneous filing and the 2019 Broadband Deployment Report raise serious questions about the way the FCC evaluates data," Starks said.

He pointed out that the report's conclusions remained largely unchanged after adjusting for the updated data. "It's incredible to me that an error this large — approximately 62 million in overstated broadband connections — didn't materially change the report," Starks said. The report, approved in a 3-2 vote along party lines, says the "digital divide" between urban and rural Americans is "narrowing" and that residents are receiving broadband "on a reasonable and timely basis." It also finds that broadband providers deployed fiber networks to 5.9 million new homes in 2018, the "largest number ever recorded."

But the data that the FCC uses to determine where broadband is being deployed has come under scrutiny, as critics say the commission should not rely so heavily on self-reported data from providers. The report asks broadband providers to account for any area where it could provide service rather than the areas where it does provide service. "There is bipartisan and near universal agreement that the FCC's method for determining how many Americans have broadband vastly overstates broadband deployment and access," Gigi Sohn, a former adviser at the FCC under the Obama administration, said in a statement.

The FCC is investigating how to fix its method of assessing broadband deployment amid heavy bipartisan scrutiny from lawmakers on Capitol Hill. "The FCC should complete its long-pending proceeding to change the methodology by which carriers measure broadband access," Sohn said in the statement. – **The Hill**

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) denounced Facebook Inc. for its refusal to take down a doctored video of her, saying the decision demonstrates the platform's disregard for the truth. "Right now they are putting up something that they know is false. I think it's wrong," she said in an interview Wednesday with San Francisco news station KQED. The video in question—which was widely shared on social media, including by Rudy Giuliani, one of President Trump's attorneys—is of a recent speech by Mrs. Pelosi that had been slowed down and altered in tone, making her appear to slur her words.

Mrs. Pelosi likened the social-media company's handling of the altered video to its failure to prevent Russia's interference in the 2016 elections. "We have said all along, 'Poor Facebook, they were unwittingly exploited by the Russians,'" she said. "I think they have proven—by not taking down something they know is false—that they were willing enablers of the Russian interference in our election." Facebook didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. In an interview with CNN last week, Facebook global policy chief Monika Bickert said the company stood by its decision to keep the video accessible. "We have acted," she said, adding that Facebook had "decelerated" its promotion of the video and is alerting people who watch or share it that independent fact-checking organizations have declared it to be false. "We think it's important for people to make their own informed choice as to what to believe."

Mrs. Pelosi's comments came the same day that [special counsel Robert Mueller spoke publicly](#) about his 22-month probe into Russian interference. While Washington has focused recently on Mr. Mueller's decision to not pursue obstruction-of-justice charges against Mr. Trump, the former FBI director called on elected leaders and the public to focus on foreign attempts to disrupt U.S. politics. "There were multiple, systematic efforts to interfere in our election. That allegation deserves the attention of every American," Mr. Mueller said Wednesday at the Justice Department. He highlighted his office's indictment last year that accused 13 Russian nationals and three Russian entities of engaging in a well-funded social-media operation that involved posing online as Americans to influence the election.

Senior U.S. intelligence officials have repeatedly warned that Russia and other hostile foreign powers remain intent on disrupting future elections, including the 2020 presidential contest. The doctored video of Mrs. Pelosi, which was viewed by a million people before the manipulation was first noted by the Washington Post, blew up further after Facebook declined to remove it from its site. It now has 2.8 million views and more than 30,000 comments, though Facebook has made it harder to find. Despite its viral success, the altered clip can't be located through obvious search terms.

YouTube, owned by Alphabet Inc.'s Google, chose to remove the altered video from its platform. Other lawmakers have called Facebook's efforts insufficient. Rep. Ro Khanna (D., Calif.), who represents Silicon Valley, where Facebook is based, [tweeted](#) that he recently heard from a voter who criticized Mrs. Pelosi's behavior in the video but didn't realize it had been doctored. "Facebook must remove the video," Mr. Khanna said in the tweet. Mrs. Pelosi's remarks add to the political pressure on Facebook, which has said it [expects to pay](#) a fine of up to \$5 billion to the Federal Trade Commission over privacy abuses. Other Democrats have criticized Facebook's efforts to stop Russian interference, though few have gone as far as to say the company willingly enabled the misinformation campaign. Many Republicans, including Mr. Trump, have accused the social-media giant of being biased against conservatives. – **Wall Street Journal**