

Senator Ted Cruz is trying to block Wi-Fi hotspots for schoolchildren

The Cruz resolution to nullify the FCC rule was co-sponsored by Sens. John Thune (R-S.D.), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), Todd Young (R-Ind.), Ted Budd (R-N.C.), Eric Schmitt (R-Mo.), John Curtis (R-Utah), Tim Sheehy (R-Mont.), Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), and Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.).

The FCC's plan

Under the CRA, Congress can reverse recent agency actions. The exact deadline isn't always clear, but the Congressional Research Service estimated "that Biden Administration rules submitted to the House or Senate on or after August 1, 2024" are likely to be subject to the CRA during the first few months of 2025. The FCC hotspot rule was submitted to Congress in August.

The FCC rule expands E-Rate, a Universal Service Fund program that helps schools and libraries obtain affordable broadband. The hotspot order would let schools and libraries use E-Rate funding for "lending programs to loan Wi-Fi hotspots and services that can be used off-premises to the students, school staff, and library patrons with the greatest need," the FCC says.

The FCC's hotspot order said "technology has become an integral part of the modern classroom," and that "neither Congress nor the Commission has defined the term 'classroom'

or placed any explicit location restrictions on schools or libraries.”

“We conclude that funding Wi-Fi hotspots and services for off-premises use will help enhance access for school classrooms and libraries to the broadband connectivity necessary to facilitate digital learning for students and school staff, as well as library services for library patrons who lack broadband access when they are away from school or library premises,” the FCC order said.

Off-premises use can help “the student who has no way of accessing their homework to prepare for the next day’s classroom lesson, or the school staff member who is unable to engage in parent-teacher meetings or professional trainings that take place after the school day ends, or the library patron who needs to attend a virtual job interview or perform bona fide research after their library’s operating hours,” the FCC said.

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