

Rural Clean Energy Infrastructure Bills

I. Clean Energy Infrastructure for Rural Communities

This bill allows the USDA Rural Utilities Service to fund transmission for renewable energy from rural to non-rural areas and natural gas facilities for rural areas.

Transmission

Currently, the USDA Rural Utilities Service has very limited options to finance rural – to non-rural transmission for renewable generation; most Rural Utilities Service loan programs are limited to transmission between rural areas.

This section would authorize USDA to provide loans for transmission that connects rural renewable generators to the transmission system. This would apply to transmission facilities primarily for the purpose of interconnecting one or more renewable energy facilities to a high-voltage transmission line.

Natural Gas

The USDA Rural Utilities Service does not currently provide financing for natural gas pipelines to connect rural areas to the interstate pipeline system. Pipelines that pass rural communities build extensions to communities with small populations only when there is a clear business justification. Rural communities that have built natural gas infrastructure have relied on state and municipal loan programs and natural gas cooperatives. Few states have funds for these programs in current economic conditions.

This section would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to make and insure loans for natural gas infrastructure to provide rural communities with access to natural gas. The maximum loan authorized under existing law is \$25 million.