On the same day Trump’s Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted to dismantle net neutrality, Trump’s USDA announced online delivery of all new farm bill programs. Here’s why that is a giant slap in the face for rural America.

providers can now speed up the delivery of content from businesses that are willing to pay, and businesses are more likely to pay for this delivery in urban areas with higher populations densities.

This will result in an increased investments in infrastructure in urban areas - and decreased investments in rural places. And small businesses in rural areas are less likely to be able to pay a premium to market their products to potential customers – meaning they’ll lose important online exposure.

A decent broadband connection can be a lifeline for small, isolated rural communities. Access to the internet is vital for growing small businesses, for providing education opportunities for rural students, for accessing medical care that is often unavailable in rural communities and for giving rural residents access to important government services which are increasingly being delivered online.

What other important rural constituency requires access to broadband internet and will be harmed by the repeal of net neutrality? Farmers.

According to a recent USDA study, only 71% of American farms are online. The vast majority of these are connecting through weak or unreliable methods like satellite or mobile hotspots. Only 8% of farms are connected through fiber.

From weather forecasting to product promotion to networking with other growers, broadband internet isn’t a luxury – it’s vital.

And on the same day Trump’s Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted along party lines to dismantle net neutrality, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced online delivery of all new farm bill programs. A broadband connection was a necessity before, but it’s now become a life-line for rural farmers to access government services like conservation programs.

Whether you’re a new farmer applying for a government loan, a disadvantaged or veteran farmer looking for training, or a community food project seeking assistance in addressing food insecurity, if you don’t have reliable and affordable high speed internet connection, this policy change coupled with the demise of net neutrality will likely affect your ability to access USDA programs and services.

USDA’s announcement of online delivery of farm bill programs on the very same day Trump’s FCC dismantled net neutrality is a slap in the face of rural residents, farmers and small business owners – many of whom were among Trump’s most important constituencies.

Rural America paved Trump’s way to victory, and the repeal of net neutrality is yet another way his policies run counter to their interests. We made a list of other ways Trump’s policies negatively impact rural America a few months ago. Sadly that list continues to grow.

The loss of net neutrality will further hinder competition. Service