



PHOENIX FOR ADVANCED
LEGAL & ECONOMIC
C E N T E R PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES
www.phoenix-center.org

5335 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Suite 440
Washington, D.C. 20015-0234
Tel: +1 (202) 274-0235
Fax: +1 (202) 318-4909
www.phoenix-center.org

Press Release

Contact: Lawrence J. Spiwak
Phone: +1 (202) 274-0235

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday – February 19, 2026

NEW PHOENIX CENTER ANALYSIS EVALUATES FCC'S STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY FOR ALLOCATING POPULATION IN BROADBAND REPORTING

Study finds the FCC's complex random allocation approach in Section 706 Reports is less accurate than simpler alternatives

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission's *Section 706 Reports* provide critical data on broadband deployment across the United States. With the transition to the new broadband fabric data, which measures availability at the location level, the FCC faces new challenges in allocating population to produce statistical reports required by statute.

In a new analysis released today entitled *Measuring Broadband at the FCC: A Peculiar Approach*, Phoenix Center Chief Economist Dr. George S. Ford examines the statistical methodology outlined in the FCC's *2024 Section 706 Report* (the most recent *Section 706 Report* available) for allocating population to Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSLs). Dr. Ford questions the Commission's approach of using a single random draw to allocate population.

"The problem is that the fabric collects data for Broadband Serviceable Locations while the Census Bureau only collects data down to the census block level, and it does so only every ten years," explains Dr. Ford. "Population, therefore, must be allocated to the Broadband Service Location by some mechanism to produce population-averaged statistics."

Dr. Ford's analysis demonstrates that the FCC's complex random allocation procedure produces less accurate results than a simpler unit-share allocation. Through empirical testing, Dr. Ford shows that the FCC's approach introduces unnecessary variability and may lead to unreliable population estimates.

"There is no reason to employ a complicated procedure when a simple procedure performs better; and one that can be easily reproduced across analysts and software platforms," said Dr. Ford. As such, Dr. Ford recommends several alternative approaches, including using regression analysis to account for variations in household size across different types of housing units.

A full copy of PHOENIX CENTER PERSPECTIVE NO. 26-01, *Measuring Broadband at the FCC: A Peculiar Approach*, may be downloaded from the Phoenix Center's web page at: <http://www.phoenix-center.org/perspectives/Perspective26-01Final.pdf>.

~ more ~

The Phoenix Center is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that studies broad public-policy issues related to governance, social and economic conditions, with a particular emphasis on the law and economics of the digital age.