

The money has run out on the federal government's Affordable Connectivity program. The FCC offered affordable internet during the pandemic so that homes could go online for school and work. The money runs out this month so families will need to pay for the internet unless Congress decides at the last minute to extend the benefits.

A decision could be made quickly to extend the program so you'll want to monitor the feed if you decide to air my story later this week. I'm looking at how to get affordable internet and how much you actually need to pay.

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SUPER
0-8 Jamey Tucker/whatthetech.tv

ON-CAMERA TEASE:

MILLIONS OF FAMILIES WILL SUDDENLY HAVE TO PAY MORE FOR THE INTERNET. AS A FEDERAL PROGRAM THAT HELPS FAMILIES STAY CONNECTED IS EXPIRING. I'M JAMEY TUCKER, I'LL HAVE THE STORY COMING UP.

ANCHOR INTRO

MILLIONS OF AMERICAN FAMILIES WILL NEED TO COME UP WITH ANOTHER THIRTY DOLLARS A MONTH TO PAY FOR THE INTERNET AFTER A FEDERAL PROGRAM TO KEEP FAMILIES ONLINE IS ENDING.

THE AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM HAS RUN OUT OF MONEY, MEANING NO MORE HELP FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES TO PAY FOR INTERNET ACCESS. OUR CONSUMER TECHNOLOGY REPORTER JAMEY TUCKER EXPLAINS.

PACKAGE SCRIPT

When the world shut down due to the pandemic, it became even more obvious that every home needs access to the internet. Students attended classes online. Moms and dads worked from home. None of that is possible without the internet. The FCC introduced the Affordable Connectivity Program to help those families pay for the internet. Now the program is expiring.

The FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program provided a discount of up to \$30 for internet service.

The program ran out of funds and those households will lose the benefit in May unless Congress passes an extension. But there is an alternative.

The FCC's Lifeline program helps pay for phone and home internet service. Families that qualify get \$10 a month toward an internet bill. People living on tribal lands may receive up to almost \$35 a month.

To qualify, someone in the home must be enrolled in Snap or Medicaid coverage. You will need to apply for the Lifeline benefit, even if you were approved for ACP. You can do that through the website www.getinternet.gov

And many households are paying for internet speeds they really don't need. For example, if you use the internet primarily for sending emails, browsing the internet, streaming on one TV and an occasional Zoom meeting, you should only need a plan offering 100 Mbps.

Check with your internet provider to see if you're paying for more than you need. That's What the tech? I'm Jamey Tucker

ANCHOR TAG

(the White House released information about who receives the help and breaks it down by state. It might make for a good break-out as a tag:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/02/06/fact-sheet-as-affordable-connectivity-program-hits-milestone-of-providing-affordable-high-speed-internet-to-23-million-households-nationwide-biden-harris-administration-calls-on-congress-t/>

THERE IS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR EXTENDING THE AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM BUT THE BILL HAS NOT MADE ITS WAY TO A VOTE IN THE SENATE.

WEB STORY

During the last few years, it's become even more apparent that internet access is no longer a luxury—it's a necessity. From online education to remote work, staying connected is crucial. However, millions of American families are facing a sudden challenge: finding an extra \$30 to \$100 a month to pay for internet services. Why? Because the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a federal initiative designed to keep families online, is coming to an end.

What Was the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)?

The ACP was launched in 2021 by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Its goal was simple: to provide a discount on internet service for qualifying low-income households. Families struggling to afford monthly broadband bills could receive up to a \$30 discount (or \$75 on tribal lands) to help bridge the digital divide. More than 23 million households across rural, suburban, and urban America relied on the ACP to stay connected for school, work, healthcare, and more.

Why Is the ACP Ending?

The ACP has run out of funds. Due to a lack of additional funding from Congress, the program will only be fully funded through April 2024. After that, participating households will no longer receive the full ACP benefit. The impact is significant, affecting older adults, families with school children, and military families at risk of losing their internet service without ACP support.

What Are the Alternatives?

Lifeline Program: The FCC's Lifeline program offers a solution. While it doesn't provide the same level of discount as the ACP, it helps eligible low-income households afford phone and home internet service. Here's how it works:

Discount: Lifeline provides up to a \$9.25 monthly discount on service for eligible low-income subscribers (up to \$34.25 per month for eligible subscribers on Tribal lands).

Eligibility: To qualify, someone in the home must be enrolled in Snap or Medicare coverage. Even if you were approved for ACP, you'll need to apply separately for Lifeline through the website www.getinternet.gov.

Choose the Right Plan: Many households pay for internet speeds they don't actually need. Consider your usage:

Basic Needs: If you primarily use the internet for sending emails, browsing, streaming on one TV, and occasional Zoom meetings, a plan with 100 Mbps is sufficient.

Higher Speeds: If multiple people in your home stream 4K video while others play online games and attend Zoom meetings simultaneously, higher speed plans may be necessary.

Cost Savings: Opting for a basic plan can save you up to \$80 a month.

As the ACP ends, it's essential to explore alternatives and make informed choices. Whether through Lifeline or a well-suited internet plan, staying connected remains crucial. Let's ensure that no family is left behind in the digital age.