

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3627

To promote the deployment and adoption of telecommunications services and information technologies, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 20, 2007

Mr. SPACE (for himself, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, and Mr. ARCURI) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To promote the deployment and adoption of telecommunications services and information technologies, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Connect The Nation
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The deployment and adoption of broadband
9 service and information technology has resulted in

1 enhanced economic development and public safety
2 for communities across the Nation, improved health
3 care and educational opportunities, and a better
4 quality of life for all Americans.

5 (2) Continued progress in the deployment and
6 adoption of broadband and other advanced informa-
7 tion services is vital to ensuring that our Nation re-
8 mains competitive and continues to create business
9 and job growth.

10 (3) The Federal Government should also recog-
11 nize and encourage complementary state efforts to
12 improve the quality and usefulness of broadband
13 data and should encourage and support the partner-
14 ship of the public and private sectors in the contin-
15 ued growth of broadband service and information
16 technology for the residents and businesses of the
17 Nation.

18 **SEC. 3. ENCOURAGING STATE INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE**
19 **BROADBAND.**

20 (a) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this section are—

21 (1) to ensure that all citizens and businesses in
22 a State have access to affordable and reliable
23 broadband service;

1 (2) to achieve improved technology literacy, in-
2 creased computer ownership, and home broadband
3 use among such citizens and businesses;

4 (3) to establish and empower local grassroots
5 technology teams in each State to plan for improved
6 technology use across multiple community sectors;
7 and

8 (4) to establish and sustain an environment
9 ripe for broadband service and information tech-
10 nology investment.

11 (b) ESTABLISHMENT OF STATE BROADBAND DATA
12 AND DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall award
14 grants, taking into account the results of the peer
15 review process under subsection (d), to eligible enti-
16 ties for the development and implementation of
17 statewide initiatives to identify and track the avail-
18 ability and adoption of broadband service within
19 each State.

20 (2) COMPETITIVE BASIS.—Any grant under this
21 section shall be awarded on a competitive basis.

22 (c) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a grant
23 under subsection (b), an eligible entity shall—

1 (1) submit an application to the Secretary, at
2 such time, in such manner, and containing such in-
3 formation as the Secretary may require; and

4 (2) agree to contribute matching non-Federal
5 funds in an amount equal to not less than 20 per-
6 cent of the total amount of the grant.

7 (d) PEER REVIEW.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall by regu-
9 lation require appropriate technical and scientific
10 peer review of applications made for grants under
11 this section.

12 (2) REVIEW PROCEDURES.—The regulations re-
13 quired under paragraph (1) shall require that any
14 technical and scientific peer review group—

15 (A) be provided a written description of
16 the grant to be reviewed;

17 (B) provide the results of any review by
18 such group to the Secretary; and

19 (C) certify that such group will enter into
20 voluntary nondisclosure agreements as nec-
21 essary to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of
22 confidential and propriety information provided
23 by broadband service providers in connection
24 with projects funded by any such grant.

1 (e) USE OF FUNDS.—A grant awarded to an eligible
2 entity under subsection (b) shall be used—

3 (1) to provide a baseline assessment of
4 broadband service deployment in each State;

5 (2) to identify and track—

6 (A) areas in each State that have low lev-
7 els of broadband service deployment;

8 (B) the rate at which residential and busi-
9 ness customers adopt broadband service and
10 other related information technology services;
11 and

12 (C) possible suppliers of such services;

13 (3) to identify barriers to the adoption by indi-
14 viduals and businesses of broadband service and re-
15 lated information technology services, including
16 whether or not—

17 (A) the demand for such services is absent;
18 and

19 (B) the supply for such services is capable
20 of meeting the demand for such services;

21 (4) to create and facilitate in each county or
22 designated region in a State a local technology plan-
23 ning team—

24 (A) with members representing a cross sec-
25 tion of the community, including representatives

of business, telecommunications labor organizations, K–12 education, health care, libraries, higher education, community-based organizations, local government, tourism, parks and recreation, and agriculture; and

(B) which shall—

(i) measure technology use across relevant community sectors;

(ii) set goals for improved technology use within each sector; and

(iii) develop a tactical business plan for achieving the local technology planning team’s goals, with specific recommendations for online application development and demand creation;

(5) to work collaboratively with broadband service providers and information technology companies to encourage deployment and use, especially in unserved and underserved areas, through the use of local demand aggregation, mapping analysis, and the creation of market intelligence to improve the business case for providers to deploy;

(6) to establish programs to improve computer ownership and Internet access for unserved and underserved populations;

1 (7) to collect and analyze detailed market data
2 concerning the use and demand for broadband serv-
3 ice and related information technology services;

4 (8) to facilitate information exchange regarding
5 the use and demand for broadband service between
6 public and private sectors; and

7 (9) to create within each State a geographic in-
8 ventory map of broadband service, which shall—

9 (A) identify gaps in such service through a
10 method of geographic information system map-
11 ping of service availability at the census block
12 level; and

13 (B) provide a baseline assessment of state-
14 wide broadband deployment in terms of house-
15 holds with high-speed availability.

16 (f) PARTICIPATION LIMIT.—For each State, an eligi-
17 ble entity may not receive a new grant under this section
18 to fund the activities described in subsection (e) within
19 such State if such organization obtained prior grant
20 awards under this section to fund the same activities in
21 that State in each of the previous 4 consecutive years.

22 (g) REPORT.—Each recipient of a grant under sub-
23 section (b) shall submit a report on the use of the funds
24 provided by the grant to the Secretary not later than 1
25 year after the funds were received.

1 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

2 (1) BROADBAND SERVICE.—The term
3 “broadband service” means any service that con-
4 nects to the public Internet that provides a data
5 transmission-rate equivalent to at least 200 kilobits
6 per second or any successor transmission-rate estab-
7 lished by the Federal Communications Commission,
8 in at least 1 direction.

9 (2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
10 ty” means a nonprofit organization—

11 (A) that is selected by a State to work in
12 partnership with State agencies and private sec-
13 tor partners in identifying and tracking the
14 availability and adoption of broadband service
15 within each State;

16 (B) that has an established competency
17 and proven record of working with public and
18 private sectors to accomplish widescale deploy-
19 ment and adoption of broadband service and in-
20 formation technology; and

21 (C) the board of directors of which is not
22 composed of a majority of individuals who are
23 also employed by, or otherwise associated with,
24 any Federal, State, or local government or any
25 Federal, State, or local agency.

1 (3) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.—The term
2 “nonprofit organization” means an organization—

3 (A) described in section 501(c)(3) of the
4 Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt
5 from tax under section 501(a) of such Code;
6 and

7 (B) no part of the net earnings of which
8 inures to the benefit of any member, founder,
9 contributor, or individual.

10 (4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
11 the Secretary of Commerce.

12 (5) STATE.—The term “State” means each
13 State, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth
14 of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the United
15 States Virgin Islands, and federally recognized In-
16 dian tribes.

17 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
18 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
19 \$40,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

20 (j) NO REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—Nothing in this
21 Act shall be construed as giving any public or private enti-
22 ty established or affected by this Act any regulatory juris-
23 diction or oversight authority over providers of broadband
24 service or information technology.

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