
HOUSE BILL 2312

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2018 Regular Session

By Representatives DeBolt, Kretz, Smith, Tharinger, and Buys

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1 AN ACT Relating to providing urban levels of internet speed and
2 access in rural areas to secure a brighter more equitable economic
3 future for all Washingtonians without increasing taxes or fees;
4 adding new sections to chapter 43.105 RCW; creating new sections; and
5 making an appropriation.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes that truly
8 high-speed internet connectivity is missing for many parts of this
9 state, and universally agreed to be essential to support educational
10 opportunity, innovations in the provision of public safety and health
11 care, and business growth. The legislature acknowledges that other
12 states, like New York, have acted decisively and successfully to
13 invest in a program to provide universal and equitable access to
14 urban-levels of broadband speed by working with private sector
15 vendors to expedite deployment of state-of-the-art broadband. The
16 legislature intends to mimic the success of New York, by utilizing a
17 similar reverse auction approach whereby the state pays the lowest
18 private sector bidder willing to build the last-mile of truly high-
19 speed broadband to the unserved and underserved populations of our
20 state.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.105
2 RCW to read as follows:

3 (1) The agency must implement and operate a reverse auction
4 program that awards funding to broadband internet service providers
5 to support high-speed internet infrastructure deployment projects in
6 unserved and underserved rural regions throughout the state. The
7 program must develop requests for proposals that:

8 (a) Require successful project proposals to provide at least one
9 commercial voice and broadband service with rates comparable to
10 similar offerings in urban areas;

11 (b) Prioritize projects that bring high-speed internet access to
12 unserved rural areas of the state beginning with those counties
13 having the highest total population without access according to the
14 federal communications commission's 2016 broadband progress report;

15 (c) Prioritize projects that seek the lowest amount of state
16 investment per new location served; and

17 (d) Consider leverage of existing telecommunications
18 infrastructure and the potential use of unique solutions.

19 (2) From amounts appropriated to it from the expanding rural
20 internet access account created in section 3 of this act, the agency
21 may incur any expenses necessary to implement and operate the
22 expanding internet access program, including:

23 (a) Development and expenditures of the reverse auction mechanism
24 under subsection (1) of this section;

25 (b) Contracting for an evaluation of the impact of the expanding
26 internet access program; and

27 (c) Paying for the administrative expenses of the expanding
28 internet access program.

29 (3) The agency must submit a report to the governor and the
30 economic development committees of the senate and the house of
31 representatives by December 1, 2021, detailing:

32 (a) The total amount of public funds committed by this program
33 annually;

34 (b) The total amount of private funds committed annually and, if
35 applicable, the amount of these funds that have been invested by
36 private parties;

37 (c) The location of each area receiving investments under this
38 program and the goals for each of these areas;

39 (d) Planned future investments by both public and private
40 parties; and

1 (e) Other information as the agency deems necessary.

2 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 43.105
3 RCW to read as follows:

4 The expanding rural internet access account is created in the
5 state treasury. Moneys appropriated to the account must be deposited
6 in the account. Moneys in the account may be spent only after
7 appropriation. Expenditures from the account may be used only for the
8 purposes described in section 2(2) of this act.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** FOR THE RURAL INTERNET ACCESS ACCOUNT. (1)
10 During the 2017-2019 fiscal biennium, the treasurer must transfer the
11 sum of \$300,000,000, from the budget stabilization account to the
12 expanding rural internet access account created in section 3 of this
13 act.

14 (2) For the 2017-2019 fiscal biennium, the sum of \$300,000,000 is
15 appropriated from the expanding rural internet access account created
16 in section 3 of this act to the consolidated technology services
17 agency. The amount is provided solely for the purposes described in
18 section 2 of this act. For purposes of RCW 43.88.055(4), the
19 appropriation in this section does not alter the requirement to
20 balance in the ensuing biennia.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The joint legislative audit and review
22 committee must conduct an evaluation of the program created in
23 section 2 of this act and report its findings and recommendations to
24 the governor and the economic development committees of the senate
25 and the house of representatives by December 1, 2021. The purpose of
26 the evaluation is to determine the extent to which the program has
27 contributed to expanding high speed internet access in unserved and
28 underserved rural areas.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** This act may be known and cited as the
30 Washington equitable broadband "web" act.

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