

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SSB 6438

C 262 L 08

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Regarding high-speed internet services and community technology opportunities.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, Rockefeller, Oemig, Honeyford, Murray, Delvin and Pridemore).

Senate Committee on Water, Energy & Telecommunications

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on Technology, Energy & Communications

House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government & Audit

Review

Background: "Broadband" and "broadband internet access" refer to the high-speed transmission of electronic information. The Federal Communications Commission defines "high-speed" as transmission in excess of 200 kilobits per second in at least one direction. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) uses a figure of 256 kilobits per second. Several different technologies are used to provide broadband internet access, including: DSL, cable modem, satellite, remote DSL, broadband over power lines, wireless internet service providers, and Wi-Fi networks. Broadband internet access is typically contrasted with dial-up internet access (occurring over a modem) that is generally capable of up to 56 kilobits per second.

Broadband is increasingly seen as a key tool for education (distance learning), healthcare (telemedicine), service-delivery (on-line buying, selling, banking, account management, etc.), entertainment (music, games, and movies), and government (information and education, reporting and filing, communication). Broadband is also looked to as a key tool for economic vitality. The OECD regards broadband internet access as an important economic indicator. In their June 2007 rankings, the OECD placed the U.S. at 15th with 22.1 internet subscribers per 100 inhabitants, while Denmark, Netherlands, Switzerland, Korea, Norway, and Iceland all had access rates in excess of 29 subscribers per 100 inhabitants.

According to a 2006 survey by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, households in rural areas are less likely to subscribe to broadband service than households in urban and suburban areas. The Pew Internet and American Life Project recently found that 24 percent of rural households had high-speed internet connections compared with 39 percent of urban and suburban households. Non-internet users as a group were additionally found to be of a disproportionate age (median age 59) and below the poverty level (25 percent had yearly household incomes under \$20,000).

The OECD identified the following factors for assessing broadband markets: penetration, usage, coverage, prices, and services and speeds. Several states have recently established state-level broadband task forces, commissions, or authorities to evaluate such factors and

provide a point for coordination, and leadership (e.g., CA, HI, KY, TN, MD, MO, NE, NY, VT, and VA).

In 2007 the Legislature appropriated \$160,000 to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) to conduct a survey to "identify factors preventing the widespread availability and use of broadband technologies." The UTC was additionally directed to identify broadband disparities in the state and report its findings to the Legislature by December 31, 2007.

Summary: By July 15, 2008, or upon completion of UTC's report, the Department of Information Services (DIS) is to convene a work group in coordination with the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, and the UTC to develop a high-speed internet deployment and adoption strategy for the state.

By December 2008 DIS is required to report to the Legislature on the options identified for implementing a statewide high-speed internet deployment and adoption strategy to:

- develop geographic information system maps and inventories of public and private high-speed internet infrastructure;
- address management of proprietary and competitively sensitive data;
- spur development of high-speed internet resources across the state;
- track residential and business adoption of high-speed internet; and
- use local technology planning teams to help with internet deployment to disenfranchised or unserved areas.

DIS or any other governmental entity is prohibited from gathering or requesting proprietary or competitively sensitive information from telecommunications or internet service providers pursuant to the statewide high-speed internet deployment and adoption effort.

DIS is required to publish a web directory of public facilities that provide community technology programs throughout the state.

The Washington State University Extension is required to administer a Community Technology Opportunity Program and Opportunity Account to provide training and assistance for low-income and under-served residents on use of information and communication technologies.

A null and void clause is added and DIS is required to include high-speed internet deployment in its 2009-11 strategic plan if the act becomes null and void.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	49	0	
House	93	0	(House amended)
Senate			(Senate refused to concur)
House	95	0	(House amended)
Senate	45	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: June 12, 2008