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West Virginia broadband policy

(The Dominion Post - McClatchy-Tribune Information Services via COMTEX) -- Gov. Joe Manchin signed West Virginia's Internet access bill into law in 2008. The legislation creates a broadband development council, provides for mapping high speed Internet services and establishes reporting requirements for state infrastructure, and requires any new service that relies on state money to be at least 600 kilobits per second -- three times the FCC's definition of high speed.

The Broadband Deployment Council contains seven members, including a representative from the Communications Workers of America, and is chaired by the governor.

The Broadband Deployment Fund collects money from gifts, donations and budget appropriations to distribute to parties that apply for financial backing for access projects.

Broadband Deployment Council It is the goal of the state, by the year 2010, to make every municipality, community and rural area in the state accessible to Internet communications through the expansion, extension and general availability of broadband services and technology.

Although market-driven deployment has extended broadband access to most of West Virginia's cities, towns and other concentrated population areas, some areas of the state, mostly rural, remain unserved.

Rising fixed costs and technological limitations prohibit broadband networks from being extended into rural areas where the level of demand in sparsely populated areas may not justify the required costs of construction.

The unique topography and demography of the state hinders the provision of broadband access to rural areas -- which specifically disadvantages the elderly and low-income households that are the least likely to own computers or subscribe to Internet service.

In the classroom, every teacher in every school should be provided with online access to educational technology resources. Schools of the 21st century require facilities that accommodate changing technologies and 21st century instructional processes.

"Broadband" or "broadband service" means any service providing advanced telecommunications capability with either a downstream data rate or upstream data rate of at least 200 kilobits per second, that does not require the end-user to dial up a connection that has the capacity to always be on, and for which the transmission speeds are based on regular available bandwidth rates, not sporadic or burstable rates.

Based on its analysis of mapping, broadband demand, and other relevant data, the council shall designate unserved areas of the state as being one of three distinct types. These types

are as follows: 1. Type 1 unserved area: an area in which broadband may be deployed by service providers in an economically feasible manner.

2. Type 2 unserved area: an unserved area in which broadband may be deployed by broadband service providers and other entities in an economically feasible manner, provided some form of public moneys is made available.

3. Type 3 unserved area: an unserved area in which, at present, cable or wireline broadband cannot be deployed in an economically feasible manner and an intermodal approach employing other technologies, such as satellite and wireless, is required to provide that area with high-speed internet access.

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