

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2009**

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HOUSE BILL 157

Short Title: Continue Study/Rural Internet Access. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Faison, Haire, Bryant, Guley (Primary Sponsors); Adams, M. Alexander, E. Floyd, Frye, Hughes, Hurley, Jackson, Jones, Lucas, Pierce, Ross, Tarleton, and R. Warren.

Referred to: Ways and Means/Broadband Connectivity, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House.

February 16, 2009

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO CREATE THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE STUDY COMMITTEE ON HIGH-SPEED INTERNET IN RURAL AREAS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. There is created the Joint Legislative Study Committee on High-speed Internet in Rural Areas. The Committee shall consist of 16 members, eight of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and eight of whom shall be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall designate one Representative as Cochair and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall designate one Senator as Cochair. Vacancies of the Committee shall be filled by the same appointing authority that made the initial appointment. The Committee shall meet on the call of its House and Senate Cochairs. A quorum of the Committee shall be a majority of its members.

SECTION 2. The Committee shall examine the availability of high-speed Internet access in rural areas. In conducting its study, the Committee may:

- (1) Consider whether rural areas have adequate access to high-speed Internet and offer proposals to assure access to high-speed Internet in rural areas.
- (2) Examine the impact of high-speed Internet access on education, small businesses, and agriculture.
- (3) Evaluate the economic impact of high-speed Internet access for individuals, counties, and the State of North Carolina.
- (4) Identify technical issues associated with providing high-speed Internet access, including the availability of necessary equipment.
- (5) Identify the potential costs to Internet providers.
- (6) Examine rate considerations, including whether customers will pay the total costs or whether the costs will be spread through the rate-making process.
- (7) Explore the impact of recent legislation allowing phone companies to provide cable service and high-speed Internet access.
- (8) Study any other issue the Committee deems relevant.

SECTION 3. While in the discharge of its official duties, the Committee may exercise all powers provided for under G.S. 120-19 and G.S. 120-19.1 through G.S. 120-19.4. Members of the Committee shall receive per diem, subsistence, and travel allowance as provided in G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5, or 138.6, as appropriate. With the prior approval of the Legislative Services Commission, the Legislative Services Officer shall assign professional and



1 clerical staff to assist the Committee in its work. The House of Representatives' and Senate's
2 Directors of Legislative Assistants shall assign clerical staff to the Committee. The Committee
3 may contract for professional, clerical, or consultant services as provided by G.S. 120-32.02.
4 The Committee may meet in the Legislative Building or Legislative Office Building and may
5 meet at various locations around the State in order to promote greater public participation in its
6 deliberations.

7 **SECTION 4.** The Committee shall submit a final report to the 2011 Session of the
8 General Assembly and may submit interim reports as it deems necessary. The Committee shall
9 terminate upon filing its final report or upon the convening of the 2011 General Assembly,
10 whichever comes first.

11 **SECTION 5.** This act is effective when it becomes law.