

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2009**

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SENATE DRS55224-LM-82* (3/5)

Short Title: Broadband Technology Funds. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Jenkins, Davis and Jones.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MATCHING FUNDS POOL TO ENABLE THE STATE TO
3 LEVERAGE FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND
4 REINVESTMENT ACT TO BE USED FOR MAPPING AND DEPLOYING
5 BROADBAND TECHNOLOGY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES.

6 Whereas, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) appropriated
7 \$4,700,000,000 for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP); and

8 Whereas, the BTOP encourages county, municipal, and nonprofit agencies to apply
9 directly to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration for funding
10 related to improving affordable access to and use of broadband technology in unserved and
11 underserved areas in the United States; and

12 Whereas, all BTOP grants will require a 20% match, an amount that will serve as a
13 barrier for participation by many low-wealth rural communities in the State that experience
14 broadband and technology related deficiencies; and

15 Whereas, a matching funds pool in the amount of \$7,400,000 could potentially
16 leverage \$37,000,000 in matching BTOP grants to be used in mapping and deploying
17 broadband, and for public access, digital literacy, and other related activities in the State; and

18 Whereas, the ARRA requires that at least one grant must be provided to each state
19 for mapping and deploying broadband; and

20 Whereas, the House Select Committee on High-Speed Internet in Rural Areas found
21 that data currently made available by broadband service providers lacks sufficient specificity to
22 permit an independent third-party assessment of the State's broadband deployment status and
23 needs; and

24 Whereas, the House Select Committee on High-Speed Internet in Rural Areas also
25 found that it is imperative that the State determine where high-speed broadband access is
26 unavailable at the granular census tract block level and that the State do so in a transparent,
27 verifiable manner to ensure that the State has the information necessary to meet federal criteria
28 and to direct federal economic stimulus funds to unserved or underserved rural areas; and

29 Whereas, the House Select Committee on High-Speed Internet in Rural Areas
30 recommended that the e-NC Authority work with other organizations to verify the availability
31 of high-speed Internet access in rural areas; and

32 Whereas, Windows on the World e-Community Development Corporation is the
33 only organization in the State that has completed a 21-county broadband accessibility study that
34 is transparent, verifiable, and granular to the census tract, block group, and delineated by race



1 and income as provided by the House Select Committee on High-Speed Internet in Rural Areas
2 recommendations; Now, therefore,

3 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

4 **SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
5 Commerce the sum of seven million four hundred thousand dollars (\$7,400,000) to be used to
6 establish a matching funds pool to leverage federal funds through the American Recovery and
7 Reinvestment Act for Broadband Technology Opportunity Grants for the purpose of mapping
8 and deploying broadband technology in the State's rural communities.

9 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2009.