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\* \* \* Vermont Universal Service Fund; Connectivity; Mobile

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Telecommunications Service \* \* \*

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Sec. 6. 30 V.S.A. § 7523 is amended to read:

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§ 7523. RATE OF CHARGE

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(a) Beginning on July 1, 2014, the rate of charge shall be two percent of

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retail telecommunications service. Beginning on July 1, 2016, the rate of

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charge shall be increased by one percent of retail telecommunications service,

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and the monies collected from this increase shall be transferred to the

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Connectivity Fund established under section 7516 of this title to specifically

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provide additional support for the Connectivity Initiative established under

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7515b of this title.

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(b) Universal Service Charges imposed and collected by the fiscal agent

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under this subchapter shall not be transferred to any other fund or used to

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support the cost of any activity other than in the manner authorized by this

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section and section 7511 of this title.

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Sec. 7. 30 V.S.A. § 7516 is amended to read:

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§ 7516. CONNECTIVITY FUND

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(a) There is created a Connectivity Fund for the purpose of providing

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support to the High-Cost Program established under section 7515 of this

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chapter and the Connectivity Initiative established under section 7515b of this

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1 chapter. The fiscal agent shall determine annually, on or before September 1,  
2 the amount of monies available to the Connectivity Fund. Such funds shall be  
3 apporportioned as follows: 35 percent to the High-Cost Program and 65 percent to  
4 the Connectivity Initiative.

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5 (b) In addition to the monies transferred to the Fund pursuant to subsection  
6 (a) of this section, monies collected from one percent of the Universal Service  
7 Charge shall be allocated to the Fund specifically to provide additional support  
8 to the Connectivity Initiative, as prescribed in subsection 7523(a) of this title.

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10 Sec. 8 **(and 3)** 30 V.S.A. § 7515b is amended to read:

11 § 7515b. CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVE

12 (a) The purpose of the Connectivity Initiative is to provide each service  
13 location in Vermont access to Internet service that is capable of speeds of at  
14 least 10 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload, or the FCC speed requirements  
15 established under Connect America Fund Phase II, whichever is higher,  
16 beginning with locations not served as of December 31, 2013 according to the  
17 minimum technical service characteristic objectives applicable at that time.  
18 Within this category of service locations, priority shall be given first to  
19 unserved and then to underserved locations. As used in this section,  
20 “unserved” means a location having access to only satellite or dial-up Internet  
21 service and “underserved” means a location having access to Internet service  
22 other than via satellite or dial-up but with speeds that are less than 4 Mbps

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1 download and 1 Mbps upload. Any new services funded in whole or in part by  
2 monies from this Initiative shall be capable of being continuously upgraded to  
3 reflect the best available, most economically feasible service capabilities.

4 (b) The Department of Public Service shall publish annually a list of census  
5 blocks, geographic corridors, or areas eligible for funding based on the  
6 Department's most recent broadband mapping data. The Department annually  
7 shall solicit proposals from service providers to deploy broadband to those  
8 eligible census blocks, geographic corridors, or areas. The Department shall  
9 give priority to proposals that reflect the lowest cost of providing services to  
10 unserved and underserved locations, or that include upgrading Internet service  
11 at one or more public schools that do not have access to "broadband" as  
12 defined by the FCC, or both; however, the Department also shall consider:

- 13 (1) the proposed data transfer rates and other data transmission  
14 characteristics of services that would be available to consumers;
- 15 (2) the price to consumers of services;
- 16 (3) the proposed cost to consumers of any new construction, equipment  
17 installation service, or facility required to obtain service;
- 18 (4) whether the proposal would use the best available technology that is  
19 economically feasible;
- 20 (5) the availability of service of comparable quality and speed; ~~and~~
- 21 (6) the objectives of the State's Telecommunications Plan;

- 1           (7) the ability of a public school to have Internet connectivity to any  
2 other district or supervisory union that meets the most recent standards for high  
3 speed Internet upload and download capacities;
- 4           (8) whether a public school has a percentage of students receiving free  
5 or reduced lunches that is above the State average;
- 6           (9) whether the community in which a public school is situated does not  
7 have high speed Internet connectivity; and
- 8           (10) whether the community in which a public school is situated is rural  
9 and has a percentage of households categorized as low-income that is higher  
10 than the State average.