

H.581

An act relating to Connectivity Initiative grant eligibility

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 30 V.S.A. § 7515b is amended to read:

§ 7515b. CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVE

(a) The purpose of the Connectivity Initiative is to provide each service location in Vermont access to Internet service that is capable of speeds of at least 10 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload, or the FCC speed requirements established under Connect America Fund Phase II, whichever is higher, beginning with locations not served as of December 31, 2013 according to the minimum technical service characteristic objectives applicable at that time. Within this category of service locations, priority shall be given first to unserved and then to underserved locations. As used in this section, “unserved” means a location having access to only satellite or dial-up Internet service and “underserved” means a location having access to Internet service with speeds that exceed satellite and dial-up speeds but are less than 4 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload. Any new services funded in whole or in part by monies from this Initiative shall be capable of being continuously upgraded to reflect the best available, most economically feasible service capabilities.

(b) The Department of Public Service shall publish annually a list of census blocks eligible for funding based on the Department’s most recent broadband

mapping data. The Department annually shall solicit proposals from service providers to deploy broadband to eligible census blocks. Funding shall be available for capital improvements only, not for operating and maintenance expenses. The Department shall give priority to proposals that reflect the lowest cost of providing services to unserved and underserved locations; however, the Department also shall consider:

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

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.