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H.307

Introduced by Representative Hooper of Burlington

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Public safety; communications; emergency preparedness; community
radio stations; grant program

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish the
Vermont Community Radio Grant Program.

An act relating to the establishment of the Vermont Community Radio
Grant Program

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

Sec. 1. VERMONT COMMUNITY RADIO GRANT PROGRAM

(a) Findings. The General Assembly finds that:

(1) Vermont's seven active community radio stations currently serve
over 200,000 Vermonters, many in rural and underserved areas.

(2) Community radio stations have consistently provided critical
information during emergencies, including Tropical Storm Irene, recent severe
flooding, and other natural disasters.

1 (3) These stations operate with small budgets, primarily relying on
2 volunteer staff and listener donations, and are ineligible for federal funding
3 through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting due to their size.

4 (4) Upcoming FCC-approved stations in Bristol, Richmond-Underhill-
5 Jericho, and Ludlow will expand coverage to nearly all Vermont counties,
6 increasing statewide accessibility to vital community radio services.

7 (5) Investment in these stations strengthens Vermont's public safety
8 network and promotes civic engagement by providing local, hyper-focused
9 content that commercial and statewide media cannot replicate.

10 (b) Intent. The intent of this section is to ensure Vermont's community
11 radio stations remain resilient and prepared to serve as lifelines during
12 emergencies while fostering local engagement and preserving Vermont's
13 unique community fabric.

14 (c) Grant program.

15 (1) The Vermont Community Radio Grant Program is established to
16 provide one-time funding to community radio stations for the purpose of:

17 (A) upgrading equipment and infrastructure necessary for reliable
18 emergency broadcasting;

19 (B) procuring and installing backup generators; and

20 (C) enhancing operational sustainability through software
21 improvements and technical training.

1 (2) The Program shall be administered by the Commissioner of Public
2 Safety or designee in collaboration with the Vermont Association of
3 Broadcasters.

4 (3) Grants shall be allocated as follows:

5 (A) Up to \$25,000.00 per station for seven active community radio
6 stations.

7 (B) Up to \$10,000.00 per station for three upcoming stations
8 currently under construction.

9 (4) To be eligible for a grant under the Program, an applicant shall:

10 (A) be a nonprofit, noncommercial community radio station licensed
11 in Vermont;

12 (B) demonstrate a history of providing emergency broadcasting
13 services or show the capacity to provide such services upon funding; and

14 (C) submit a detailed implementation plan for the proposed use of
15 grant funding.

16 (d) Report. On or before June 30, 2026, a community radio station that
17 receives a grant under the Program shall provide to the Commissioner of
18 Public Safety a report detailing the:

19 (1) use of grant funds, including itemized expenses;

20 (2) improvements achieved in emergency readiness and operational
21 capacity; and

1 (3) impact on community service and engagement.

2 Sec. 2. APPROPRIATION

3 In fiscal year 2026, the sum of \$205,000.00 is appropriated from the
4 General Fund to the Department of Public Safety for the purpose of funding
5 the Vermont Community Radio Grant Program. Any unexpended funds shall
6 revert to the General Fund on or before July 1, 2026.

7 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

8 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.