



H.R. 3919 – Broadband Census of America Act of 2007

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 3919 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Edward Markey (D-MA) on October 22, 2007. The Committee on Energy and Commerce approved the bill, as amended, by voice vote on October 30, 2007.

H.R. 3919 is expected to be considered on the floor on November 13, 2007.

SUMMARY

Annual Broadband Service Assessment: The bill requires the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to annually report on broadband services capabilities throughout the United States. This report must include information on 1) the types of broadband technology being used; 2) the nature and extent of broadband service capability; 3) the number of residential and business subscribers to broadband services for each State and each zip code; and 4) a comparison of broadband service capabilities in 75 communities from at least 25 countries throughout the world.

The FCC must issue regulations to implement this section within 6 months.

Broadband Inventory Map: The bill requires the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to develop and maintain a broadband inventory map that depicts the deployment and availability of broadband service capabilities in the U.S. This map must be capable of breaking down the information for each State and for each county or parish. The NTIA is required to publish this information within two years of the bill's enactment.

Broadband Map Development Grants: The bill authorizes the NTIA to provide grants to facilitate the development of the broadband inventory map. The bill requires grant recipients to provide a 20 percent match for carrying out the grant's activities.

Local Technology Planning Grants: The bill establishes a NTIA grant program to assist with the local planning and development of broadband capacity. Funds from the grants are expressly prohibited from being used to acquire equipment or facilities to improve capabilities.

Consumer Survey of Broadband Service Capabilities: The bill requires the FCC to conduct periodic consumer surveys of the types, costs, availability, and effectiveness of broadband services. This information must make the results available to the public at least once a year.

Confidentiality of Consumer Information: The bill requires the FCC to issue regulations to protect the confidentiality of personal consumer information.

Authorization of Appropriation: The bill authorizes \$20 million for each fiscal year 2008-2010 for development of the Broadband Inventory Map, the Broadband Map Development Grants, and the consumer surveys. Of this funding, no less than \$15 million must be available only for the grants.

The bill also authorizes the following amounts for the Local Technology Planning Grants:

- \$50 million for FY2008;
- \$100 million for FY2009; and
- \$125 million for FY2010.

BACKGROUND

Broadband internet access provides users with the ability to send and receive significantly larger amounts of information over the internet than using telephone lines. This technology is a significant tool for government, business, and individual users.

Broadband access, however, is not evenly distributed throughout the United States, with some rural and low-income areas having more limited availability. Telecommunications companies are building infrastructure and developing technologies, ranging from cable to DSL to satellite, to respond to market demands for broadband access.

According to the Congressional Research Service, 53 percent of American households use broadband. Furthermore, as of December 31, 2006, there is at least one high-speed subscriber in 99 percent of all U.S. zip codes.

COST

A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate for this legislation was not available at the time of this publication.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Shea Loper at (202) 226-2302.