

106TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 4477

To establish a Digital Bridge Trust Fund to fund programs to improve the skills and career opportunities in information technology and related fields for individuals in underserved rural and urban communities, and for Native Americans, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 17, 2000

Mr. TOWNS (for himself, Ms. WATERS, Mr. DINGELL, Mr. RUSH, Mr. WYNN, Mr. CUMMINGS, Ms. KILPATRICK, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. HILLIARD, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mrs. MEEK of Florida, Mr. FORD, Ms. CARSON, and Mr. PAYNE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Ways and Means, Education and the Workforce, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Banking and Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To establish a Digital Bridge Trust Fund to fund programs to improve the skills and career opportunities in information technology and related fields for individuals in underserved rural and urban communities, and for Native Americans, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Digital Bridge Trust
3 Fund Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. DIGITAL BRIDGE TRUST FUND AND ASSISTANCE**
5 **FROM TRUST FUND.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—The National Telecommuni-
7 cations and Information Administration Organization Act
8 is amended—

9 (1) by redesignating part C as part D; and

10 (2) by inserting after part B (47 U.S.C. 921 et
11 seq.) the following new part:

12 **“PART C—ASSISTANCE TO BRIDGE THE DIGITAL**
13 **DIVIDE**

14 **“SEC. 131. DIGITAL BRIDGE TRUST FUND.**

15 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the
16 Treasury of the United States a trust fund to be known
17 as the Digital Bridge Trust Fund, consisting of such
18 amounts as may be appropriated or credited pursuant to
19 subsection (b) or (d).

20 “(b) TRANSFER OF AMOUNTS EQUIVALENT TO CER-
21 TAIN TAXES.—There are hereby appropriated to the Dig-
22 ital Bridge Trust Fund amounts equivalent to 100 percent
23 of the taxes received in the Treasury after September 30,
24 2000, under section 4251 of the Internal Revenue Code
25 of 1986 (relating to tax on communications).

1 “(c) EXPENDITURES.—Amounts in the Digital
2 Bridge Trust Fund shall be available, to the extent pro-
3 vided in appropriation Acts, solely for making expendi-
4 tures to provide assistance under section 133(a).

5 “(d) TREATMENT AS TRUST FUND.—For purposes
6 of subchapter B of chapter 98 of the Internal Revenue
7 Code of 1986, the Digital Bridge Trust Fund shall be con-
8 sidered to be a trust fund established by subchapter A of
9 such chapter.

10 **“SEC. 132. BOARD OF TRUSTEES.**

11 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the
12 Department of Commerce a board to be known as the
13 Board of Trustees of the Digital Bridge Trust Fund (in
14 this part referred to as the ‘Board’).

15 “(b) DUTIES.—The duties of the Board shall be—

16 “(1) to allocate amounts in the Digital Bridge
17 Trust Fund and make such amounts available in ac-
18 cordance with the requirements of section 133;

19 “(2) to make decisions regarding the allocation
20 of assistance from amounts in the Digital Bridge
21 Trust Fund under subsections (b)(2) and (c) of sec-
22 tion 133 and make such amounts available in ac-
23 cordance with such allocation decisions;

24 “(3) in making such decisions, to consult with
25 foundations and other nongovernmental organiza-

1 tions involved in promoting or providing education
2 or training in knowledge or skills regarding informa-
3 tion technology; and

4 “(4) to prepare and submit annual reports in
5 accordance with subsection (g).

6 “(c) MEMBERSHIP.—The Board shall consist of 11
7 members as follows:

8 “(1) The Secretary of Commerce (or the Sec-
9 retary’s designee), who shall be the chairperson of
10 the Board.

11 “(2) 2 members appointed by the Secretary of
12 Commerce from among the officers and employees of
13 the Department of Commerce.

14 “(3) 2 members appointed by the Secretary of
15 Education from among the officers and employees of
16 the Department of Education.

17 “(4) 2 members appointed by the Secretary of
18 Labor from among the officers and employees of the
19 Department of Labor.

20 “(5) 2 members appointed by the Secretary of
21 Health and Human Services from among the officers
22 and employees of the Department of Health and
23 Human Services.

24 “(6) 2 members appointed by the Secretary of
25 Housing and Urban Development from among the

1 officers and employees of the Department of Hous-
2 ing and Urban Development.

3 The initial members of the Board shall be appointed not
4 later than the expiration of the 6-month period beginning
5 on the date of the enactment of the Digital Bridge Trust
6 Fund Act.

7 “(d) TERMS.—

8 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-
9 graph (2), each member shall be appointed for a
10 term of 3 years.

11 “(2) VACANCIES.—Any member appointed to
12 fill a vacancy occurring before the expiration of the
13 term for which the member’s predecessor was ap-
14 pointed shall be appointed only for the remainder of
15 that term. A member may serve after the expiration
16 of that member’s term until a successor has taken
17 office. A vacancy in the Commission shall be filled
18 in the manner in which the original appointment was
19 made.

20 “(e) PROHIBITION OF COMPENSATION.—Members of
21 the Board shall not receive any pay, allowances, or bene-
22 fits by reason of their service on the Board.

23 “(f) SUPPORT SERVICES AND FACILITIES.—Upon
24 the request of the Board, the Secretary of Commerce shall
25 provide to the Board any facilities and administrative and

1 other support services necessary for the Board to carry
2 out its responsibilities.

3 “(g) ANNUAL REPORTS.—The Board shall submit a
4 report annually to the President and the Congress regard-
5 ing its activities. Each report shall describe the assistance
6 provided from the Digital Bridge Trust Fund during the
7 year for which the report is made and any effects of such
8 assistance in meeting the information technology needs of
9 rural, urban, and Native American communities.

10 **“SEC. 133. PROVISION OF DIGITAL BRIDGE ASSISTANCE.**

11 “(a) ALLOCATION OF ASSISTANCE.—In providing as-
12 sistance pursuant to this section, the Board shall ensure
13 that, notwithstanding any provision of law referred to in
14 subsection (b), all such assistance is—

15 “(1) made available for the benefit of rural and
16 urban areas, and Native Americans, in a manner
17 that targets such assistance for areas, communities,
18 and populations (including low-income families and
19 individuals) that are underserved with respect to in-
20 formation technology needs, employment, and edu-
21 cation; and

22 “(2) to the greatest extent possible, ensure that
23 such assistance is appropriately allocated so that
24 rural and urban areas, and Native Americans, are
25 each fairly served by such amounts.

1 “(b) REQUIRED MINIMUM ASSISTANCE.—Except as
2 provided in subsections (c) and (d), from the amount made
3 available under section 135 for each of fiscal years 2001
4 through 2010, the Board shall make assistance available
5 for the following activities in the following amounts:

6 “(1) TEACHER TRAINING.—For each such fiscal
7 year, not less than \$300,000,000 for assistance
8 under section 3122 of the Elementary and Sec-
9 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6832) for
10 training teachers to use technology effectively in the
11 classroom.

12 “(2) COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY CENTERS.—For
13 each such fiscal year, not less than \$200,000,000 for
14 assistance under section 3122 of the Elementary
15 and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
16 6832) for establishing community technology centers
17 to provide individuals who cannot afford access to
18 computers, technology training, and technological
19 tools such access appropriate to improve their edu-
20 cational performance and their ability to compete for
21 and hold jobs.

22 “(3) NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK LEARNING
23 CENTERS.—For each such fiscal year, not less than
24 \$200,000,000 for assistance by the Secretary of
25 Housing and Urban Development for public-private

1 partnerships to establish neighborhood learning cen-
2 ters providing computer-based services to help resi-
3 dents of federally assisted housing learn critical com-
4 puter skills that will improve their educational per-
5 formance and employment qualifications.

6 “(4) TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT FUND.—For
7 each such fiscal year, not less than \$200,000,000 for
8 the Technology Development Fund under section
9 714 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C.
10 614) to provide loans and investment capital to
11 small communications businesses to stimulate new
12 technological growth and development, promote uni-
13 versal service, and enhance the delivery of tele-
14 communications services to rural and underserved
15 areas.

16 “(5) TECHNOLOGY OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM.—
17 For each such fiscal year, not less than
18 \$145,000,000 for grants under the Technology Op-
19 portunity Program of the Secretary of Commerce
20 pursuant to subpart A of part IV of the Communica-
21 tions Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 390 et seq.) to provide
22 matching funds to State, local, and tribal govern-
23 ments and nonprofit entities to extend the benefit of
24 information technology to all Americans, especially
25 those in underserved areas.

1 “(6) RURAL, URBAN, AND NATIVE AMERICAN
2 TECHNOLOGY TRAINING.—For each such fiscal year,
3 not less than \$300,000,000 for preparing residents
4 of rural and urban areas, and Native Americans, for
5 careers in programming, database development, net-
6 work engineering, and other advance information
7 and technical fields.

8 “(7) BROADBAND NETWORK DEPLOYMENT.—
9 For each such fiscal year, not less than
10 \$100,000,000 for assistance regarding deployment
11 of broadband networks (including wireless and
12 wireline technologies), except that of such amount in
13 each such fiscal year—

14 “(A) not less than \$2,000,000 shall be
15 available only for research activities of the Na-
16 tional Telecommunications and Information Ad-
17 ministration regarding improvement of
18 broadband (including wireless and wireline)
19 technology in support of next-generation Inter-
20 net; and

21 “(B) not less than \$98,000,000 shall be
22 available only for assistance under the Public
23 Works and Economic Development Act of 1965
24 (42 U.S.C. 3121 et seq.) for implementing de-
25 ployment of such networks.

1 “(8) HOME INTERNET ACCESS PROGRAM.—For
2 each such fiscal year, not less than \$100,000,000 for
3 grants under a Home Internet Access Program of
4 the National Telecommunications and Information
5 Administration pursuant to subpart A of part IV of
6 the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 390 et
7 seq.) to assist public-private partnerships to address
8 the needs of low-income individuals and families in
9 gaining access to technology and online resources at
10 home, except that notwithstanding subsections (a)
11 and (c) of section 392 of such Act, such amounts
12 may be used to support activities to provide low-in-
13 come individuals and families with access to the
14 Internet in their homes.

15 “(9) FALLING THROUGH THE NET SURVEY.—
16 Only for fiscal years 2004 and 2007, not less than
17 \$500,000 for each such fiscal year for the National
18 Telecommunications and Information Administration
19 for conducting the Falling Through the Net survey,
20 pursuant to sections 901 and 902 of the National
21 Telecommunications and Information Administration
22 Organization Act (47 U.S.C. 901, 902) to determine
23 the extent to which Americans have access to tele-
24 phones, computers, and the Internet.

1 “(c) ASSISTANCE ALLOCATED AT DISCRETION OF
2 BOARD.—The Board shall use any amounts made avail-
3 able under section 135 for any fiscal year that are in ex-
4 cess of the amounts required to be used for assistance
5 under subsection (b) to provide—

6 “(1) assistance under the programs referred to
7 in such paragraph in addition to the amounts re-
8 quired under such paragraph; or

9 “(2) other assistance, as the Board determines
10 appropriate, to serve the information technology
11 needs of, or improve the information technology edu-
12 cational or employment opportunities for, residents
13 of rural and urban areas, and Native Americans,
14 that are underserved with respect to information
15 technology needs, jobs, and education.

16 The Board shall have complete discretion to make
17 amounts available under this paragraph for any of the
18 purposes referred to in this paragraph in such amounts
19 as the Board determines appropriate.

20 “(d) AUTHORITY TO REDUCE REQUIRED ASSIST-
21 ANCE IN SECOND 5 YEARS.—In any of fiscal years 2006
22 through 2010, the Board may, by a vote of not less than
23 8 members of the Board held not more than 3 months
24 before the beginning of such fiscal year, waive the applica-
25 bility of any one or more of the paragraphs of subsection

1 (b) for such fiscal year and provide assistance for such
2 fiscal year for the purpose referred to in such paragraph
3 in any reduced amount determined appropriate by the
4 Board. Any amounts otherwise required to be used under
5 any such paragraph of subsection (b) that are available
6 by reason of action by the Board pursuant to this sub-
7 section shall be treated as excess amounts to be allo-
8 cated and made available by the Board under subsection
9 (c).

10 “(e) PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES.—Notwithstanding any
11 provision of subsection (b) or (c), amounts made available
12 under section 135 may not be used for the construction,
13 rehabilitation, or acquisition of any structure in which to
14 provide training or other information technology services
15 assisted pursuant to subsection (a).

16 **“SEC. 134. REGULATIONS.**

17 The Secretary of Commerce may prescribe such regu-
18 lations as may be necessary to carry out this part.

19 **“SEC. 135. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

20 For each of fiscal years 2001 through 2010 there are
21 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this part an
22 amount equal to the amount deposited to the Digital
23 Bridge Trust Fund for such fiscal year pursuant to section
24 131.”.

1 (b) REPEAL.—Effective October 1, 2010, part C of
2 the National Telecommunications and Information Ad-
3 ministration Organization Act is repealed.

4 **SEC. 3. REDUCTION OF EXCISE TAX ON TELEPHONE AND**
5 **OTHER COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES.**

6 (a) REDUCTION.—Section 4251(b)(2) of the Internal
7 Revenue Code of 1986 is amended to read as follows:

8 “(2) APPLICABLE PERCENTAGE.—The term
9 ‘applicable percentage’ means 1.5 percent.”

10 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by
11 subsection (a) shall apply to amounts paid pursuant to
12 bills first rendered after September 30, 2000.

13 (b) REPEAL.—Subchapter B of chapter 33 of the In-
14 ternal Revenue Code of 1986 is repealed effective with re-
15 spect to bills rendered on or after October 1, 2010.

16 (c) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of the Con-
17 gress that providers of communications services (as such
18 term is defined in section 4251(b) of the Internal Revenue
19 Code of 1986) should not increase rates for such services
20 based upon any reduction in the excise tax on such serv-
21 ices pursuant to the amendments made by this section.

○