

The Digital Bridge Trust Fund Act HR 4477

Part C. Assistance to Bridge the Digital Divide

Section. 131 Digital Bridge Trust Fund

- (a) **Establishment-** The Treasury of the United States will establish the Digital Bridge Trust Fund. The amounts appropriated or credited based on (pursuant to) subsection (b) or (d).
- (b) **Transfer of Amounts Equivalent to Certain Taxes-** The Fund shall receive funding through 100 percent of taxes received from a communications tax after September 30, 2000.
- (c) **Expenditures-** The Fund will provide financial assistance to rural and urban areas, and Native Americans who lack technology resources and education. Also, it will be responsible for fairly allocating these resources between these communities.
- (d) **Treatment as Trust Fund-** Under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, (subchapter B of chapter 98) the Digital Bridge Trust Fund qualifies to be treated as a trust fund.

Section. 132 Board of Trustees.

- (a) **Establishment-** The Board of Trustees of the Digital Bridge Trust Fund (also referred to as the “Board”) will be established by the Department of Commerce.
- (b) **Duties-** The Board will be responsible for
 1. the allocation of resources, under the requirements of section 133.
 2. Decide the allocation of assistance from the trust fund to subsections (b) (2) and (c) of section 133
 3. when making decisions, consult with different foundations and non-governmental organizations involve in either promoting or providing education or training regarding information technology
 4. The preparation and submission of annual reports.
- (c) **Membership -** The Board of Trustees will consist of 11 members from five different government departments:
 1. Secretary of Commerce or secretary’s designee- will be chairperson of the BD.
 2. 2 from the Department of Commerce’s officers and employees, appointed Secretary of Commerce
 3. 2 from the Department of Education officers and employees, appointed by the Secretary of Education
 4. 2 from the Department of Labor officers and employees, appointed by the Secretary of Labor
 5. 2 from the Department of Health and Human Service officers and employees, appointed by the Secretary of Health and Human Service
 6. 2 from the Department of Housing and Urban Development officers and employees, appointed by the Secretary of Health and Human Service
 7. The initial members shall be appointed within the six-months of the enactment of the Digital Bridge Trust Fund Act.

(d) Terms

1. The term of the Board of Trustees will be for 3 years.
2. However, if a person was chosen to fill a vacancy, that individual can only remain on the board for the duration of that term.

(e) Prohibition of Compensation- The Board is prohibited from receiving any kind of pay, allowances, or benefits for their service on the board.

(f) Support Services and Facilities- Upon request of the Board, the Secretary of Commerce will provide to the Board any facilities, administrative, and other support services necessary for the Board to carry out its responsibilities.

(g) Annual Reports- And finally, the Board is responsible for preparing and submitting an annual report to the President and the Congress regarding its expenditures and the impact of these programs.

Section 133 Provision of Digital Bridge Assistance.

(a) Allocation of Assistance- when providing assistance the board shall ensure that (aside from subsection b), all assistance

1. made available benefit rural, native and Native American in that it targets areas, communities and populations (including low-income families and individuals) that are underserved with information technology needs, employment and education.
2. Ensure that assistance is allocated so each area is treated fairly by the amounts.

(b) Required Minimum Assistance- the board shall fund the following activities in the following amounts. Except as provided in subsections (c) and (d) under section 135 for each fiscal years 2001 through 2010,

1. **Teacher Training-** \$300M - training teachers to use technology effectively in the classroom. (section 3122 of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965)
2. **Community Technology Centers -** \$200M - establishing community centers to provide technological tools and training to those who cannot afford access to computers.
3. **Neighborhood Network Learning Centers -** \$200M- public/private partnerships to establish neighborhood learning centers to help residents of federally assisted housing to learn critical computer skills.
4. **Technology Development Fund-** \$200M - provide loans and investment capital to small businesses to stimulate new technological growth and development, promote universal service and enhance the delivery of telecommunications services to underserved and rural areas.
5. **Technology Opportunity Program-** \$145M -matching funds to state, local and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations to extend benefits of information technology to all American.
6. **Rural, Urban and Native American Technology Training-** \$300M - For preparing residents of rural, urban and Native Americans for careers in information technology
7. **Broadband Network Deployment-** \$100M for assistance deploying broadband networks. Except

- a. \$2M for research at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) regarding deployment of broadband technology in support of next-generation Internet.
 - b. \$98M -only for assistance under Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3121 et seq.)
8. **Home Internet Access Program**-\$100M for grants under Department of Commerce (NTIA) Internet Access Program to assist public-private partnerships to address the needs of low-income individuals and families.
 9. **Falling Through The Net Survey**- Only for fiscal years 2004-2007, \$500K for NTIA to conduct surveys to determine the extent to which Americans have access to telephones, computers and the Internet.

(c) Assistance Allocated at Discretion of Board – The board shall use any excess amounts for assistance under subsection (b) to provide

1. assistance to the above listed programs, in addition to amounts required or
2. other programs the Board determines appropriate to serve or improve the information technology educational or employment opportunities for residents of rural, urban areas and Native Americans.

The Board has complete authority to make amounts available (under this paragraph) for purposes the Board determines appropriate.

(d) Authority to Reduce Required Assistance in Second Five Years- In fiscal years 2006-2010. The board with a vote of 8 or more, within three months of the beginning of the fiscal year can cut funding to any of the programs in subsection (b) it determine. The amounts now available, shall be treated as excess and can be used as described in subsection (c).

(e) Prohibited Activities- Funds shall not be used for the construction, rehabilitation, or acquisition of any structure in which training or other information technology services are to be provided.

Section 134: Regulations.

The Secretary of Commerce may issue regulations as necessary to carry out the provisions of part C.

Section 135: Authorization of Appropriations.

For each of fiscal years 2001 through 2010, funds equal to the amount deposited in the Digital Bridge Trust Fund (pursuant to section 131) for such fiscal year are authorized to carry out part C.

(b): Repeal.

Effective October 1, 2010, part C—Assistance to Bridge the Digital Divide—of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act is repealed.

Section 3. Reduction of Excise Tax on Telephone and Other Communications Services.

(a): Reduction.

The Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended to reduce the federal telephone excise tax from 3% to 1.5%. The new amount is to be applied to bills first rendered after September 30, 2000.

(b): Effective Date.

Authorization for the federal telephone excise tax is to be repealed with respect to bills rendered on or after October 1, 2010.

(c): Sense of Congress.

It is the sense of Congress that communication service providers should not increase rates based on any cut in the federal telephone excise tax.