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,
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

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

SEC. 2. DIGITAL BRIDGE TRUST FUND AND ASSISTANCE FROM TRUST FUND.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act is amended—

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

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

“PART C—ASSISTANCE TO BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

“SEC. 131. DIGITAL BRIDGE TRUST FUND.

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

“(b) TRANSFER OF AMOUNTS EQUIVALENT TO CERTAIN TAXES.—There are hereby appropriated to the Digital Bridge Trust Fund amounts equivalent to 100 percent of the taxes received in the Treasury after September 30, 2000, under section 4251 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (relating to tax on communications).
“(c) EXPENDITURES.—Amounts in the Digital Bridge Trust Fund shall be available, to the extent provided in appropriation Acts, solely for making expenditures to provide assistance under section 133(a).

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

“SEC. 132. BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

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

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

“(1) to allocate amounts in the Digital Bridge Trust Fund and make such amounts available in accordance with the requirements of section 133;

“(2) to make decisions regarding the allocation of assistance from amounts in the Digital Bridge Trust Fund under subsections (b)(2) and (c) of section 133 and make such amounts available in accordance with such allocation decisions;

“(3) in making such decisions, to consult with foundations and other nongovernmental organiz-
tions involved in promoting or providing education
or training in knowledge or skills regarding informa-
tion technology; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“(6) 2 members appointed by the Secretary of
Housing and Urban Development from among the
officers and employees of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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

“(d) TERMS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), each member shall be appointed for a term of 3 years.

“(2) VACANCIES.—Any member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring before the expiration of the term for which the member’s predecessor was appointed shall be appointed only for the remainder of that term. A member may serve after the expiration of that member’s term until a successor has taken office. A vacancy in the Commission shall be filled in the manner in which the original appointment was made.

“(e) PROHIBITION OF COMPENSATION.—Members of the Board shall not receive any pay, allowances, or benefits by reason of their service on the Board.

“(f) SUPPORT SERVICES AND FACILITIES.—Upon the request of the Board, the Secretary of Commerce shall provide to the Board any facilities and administrative and
other support services necessary for the Board to carry out its responsibilities.

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

“SEC. 133. PROVISION OF DIGITAL BRIDGE ASSISTANCE.

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

“(1) made available for the benefit of rural and urban areas, and Native Americans, in a manner that targets such assistance for areas, communities, and populations (including low-income families and individuals) that are underserved with respect to information technology needs, employment, and education; and

“(2) to the greatest extent possible, ensure that such assistance is appropriately allocated so that rural and urban areas, and Native Americans, are each fairly served by such amounts.
“(b) Required Minimum Assistance.—Except as provided in subsections (c) and (d), from the amount made available under section 135 for each of fiscal years 2001 through 2010, the Board shall make assistance available for the following activities in the following amounts:

“(1) Teacher Training.—For each such fiscal year, not less than $300,000,000 for assistance under section 3122 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6832) for training teachers to use technology effectively in the classroom.

“(2) Community Technology Centers.—For each such fiscal year, not less than $200,000,000 for assistance under section 3122 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6832) for establishing community technology centers to provide individuals who cannot afford access to computers, technology training, and technological tools such access appropriate to improve their educational performance and their ability to compete for and hold jobs.

“(3) Neighborhood Network Learning Centers.—For each such fiscal year, not less than $200,000,000 for assistance by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for public-private
partnerships to establish neighborhood learning centers providing computer-based services to help residents of federally assisted housing learn critical computer skills that will improve their educational performance and employment qualifications.

“(4) Technology Development Fund.—For each such fiscal year, not less than $200,000,000 for the Technology Development Fund under section 714 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 614) to provide loans and investment capital to small communications businesses to stimulate new technological growth and development, promote universal service, and enhance the delivery of telecommunications services to rural and underserved areas.

“(5) Technology Opportunity Program.—For each such fiscal year, not less than $145,000,000 for grants under the Technology Opportunity Program of the Secretary of Commerce pursuant to subpart A of part IV of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 390 et seq.) to provide matching funds to State, local, and tribal governments and nonprofit entities to extend the benefit of information technology to all Americans, especially those in underserved areas.
“(6) **RURAL, URBAN, AND NATIVE AMERICAN TECHNOLOGY TRAINING.**—For each such fiscal year, not less than $300,000,000 for preparing residents of rural and urban areas, and Native Americans, for careers in programming, database development, network engineering, and other advance information and technical fields.

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

“(A) not less than $2,000,000 shall be available only for research activities of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration regarding improvement of broadband (including wireless and wireline) technology in support of next-generation Internet; and

“(B) not less than $98,000,000 shall be available only for assistance under the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3121 et seq.) for implementing deployment of such networks.
“(8) HOME INTERNET ACCESS PROGRAM.—For each such fiscal year, not less than $100,000,000 for grants under a Home Internet Access Program of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration pursuant to subpart A of part IV of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 390 et seq.) to assist public-private partnerships to address the needs of low-income individuals and families in gaining access to technology and online resources at home, except that notwithstanding subsections (a) and (c) of section 392 of such Act, such amounts may be used to support activities to provide low-income individuals and families with access to the Internet in their homes.

“(9) FALLING THROUGH THE NET SURVEY.— Only for fiscal years 2004 and 2007, not less than $500,000 for each such fiscal year for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration for conducting the Falling Through the Net survey, pursuant to sections 901 and 902 of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act (47 U.S.C. 901, 902) 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 amounts made available under section 135 for any fiscal year that are in excess of the amounts required to be used for assistance under subsection (b) to provide—

“(1) assistance under the programs referred to in such paragraph in addition to the amounts required under such paragraph; or

“(2) other assistance, as the Board determines appropriate, to serve the information technology needs of, or improve the information technology educational or employment opportunities for, residents of rural and urban areas, and Native Americans, that are underserved with respect to information technology needs, jobs, and education.

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

“(d) Authority To Reduce Required Assistance in Second 5 Years.—In any of fiscal years 2006 through 2010, the Board may, by a vote of not less than 8 members of the Board held not more than 3 months before the beginning of such fiscal year, waive the applicability of any one or more of the paragraphs of subsection
(b) for such fiscal year and provide assistance for such fiscal year for the purpose referred to in such paragraph in any reduced amount determined appropriate by the Board. Any amounts otherwise required to be used under any such paragraph of subsection (b) that are available by reason of action by the Board pursuant to this subsection shall be treated as excess amounts to be allocated and made available by the Board under subsection (e).

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

“SEC. 134. REGULATIONS.

The Secretary of Commerce may prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to carry out this part.

“SEC. 135. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

For each of fiscal years 2001 through 2010 there are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this part an amount equal to the amount deposited to the Digital Bridge Trust Fund for such fiscal year pursuant to section 131.”.
(b) REPEAL.—Effective October 1, 2010, part C of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act is repealed.

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

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

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

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

(b) REPEAL.—Subchapter B of chapter 33 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is repealed effective with respect to bills rendered on or after October 1, 2010.

(e) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of the Congress that providers of communications services (as such term is defined in section 4251(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) should not increase rates for such services based upon any reduction in the excise tax on such services pursuant to the amendments made by this section.