

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2009**

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**HOUSE BILL 826\***

Short Title: Broadband Technology Funds. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Spear; Bryant, Faison, Hughes, Wainwright, and Wray.

Referred to: Appropriations.

March 30, 2009

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MATCHING FUNDS POOL TO ENABLE THE STATE TO  
LEVERAGE FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND  
REINVESTMENT ACT TO BE USED FOR MAPPING AND DEPLOYING  
BROADBAND TECHNOLOGY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES.

Whereas, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) appropriated \$4,700,000,000 for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP); and

Whereas, the BTOP encourages county, municipal, and nonprofit agencies to apply directly to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration for funding related to improving affordable access to and use of broadband technology in unserved and underserved areas in the United States; and

Whereas, all BTOP grants will require a 20% match, an amount that will serve as a barrier for participation by many low-wealth rural communities in the State that experience broadband and technology related deficiencies; and

Whereas, a matching funds pool in the amount of \$7,400,000 could potentially leverage \$37,000,000 in matching BTOP grants to be used in mapping and deploying broadband, and for public access, digital literacy, and other related activities in the State; and

Whereas, the ARRA requires that at least one grant must be provided to each state for mapping and deploying broadband; and

Whereas, the House Select Committee on High-Speed Internet in Rural Areas found that data currently made available by broadband service providers lacks sufficient specificity to permit an independent third-party assessment of the State's broadband deployment status and needs; and

Whereas, the House Select Committee on High-Speed Internet in Rural Areas also found that it is imperative that the State determine where high-speed broadband access is unavailable at the granular census tract block level and that the State do so in a transparent, verifiable manner to ensure that the State has the information necessary to meet federal criteria and to direct federal economic stimulus funds to unserved or underserved rural areas; and

Whereas, the House Select Committee on High-Speed Internet in Rural Areas recommended that the e-NC Authority work with other organizations to verify the availability of high-speed Internet access in rural areas; and

Whereas, Windows on the World e-Community Development Corporation is the only organization in the State that has completed a 21-county broadband accessibility study that is transparent, verifiable, and granular to the census tract, block group, and delineated by race and income as provided by the House Select Committee on High-Speed Internet in Rural Areas recommendations; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:



1           **SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of  
2 Commerce the sum of seven million four hundred thousand dollars (\$7,400,000) to be used to  
3 establish a matching funds pool to leverage federal funds through the American Recovery and  
4 Reinvestment Act for Broadband Technology Opportunity Grants for the purpose of mapping  
5 and deploying broadband technology in the State's rural communities.

6           **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2009.