

## BRINGING BROADBAND STIMULUS DOLLARS TO PENNSYLVANIA

In hopes of continuing its role as a leader in a nationwide broadband deployment, Pennsylvania has applied for \$108 million of the federal government's \$7.2 billion broadband stimulus program, the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP).

Pennsylvania applied for funding through the Office of Administration, the Department of Community and Economic Development, the Department of Education and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

The Department of Community and Economic Development and Office of Administration requested \$4.5 million for broadband mapping and planning activities, as part of the state's Broadband Data and Development Program. This mapping inventory program, one of the best in the country, allows for the collection of information of broadband coverage throughout the Commonwealth, regardless of the technology used to deliver the service. The funding requested would allow Pennsylvania to enhance this process in terms of data collection, accuracy and consistency. As the sixth most populated state in America, with a wide range of topographical challenges, these improvements in mapping would benefit all of Pennsylvania, as well as those dealing with and within the state.

The Department of Community and Economic Development also requested \$7.9 million of the BTOP money to establish thirteen centers to aid communities, businesses and a myriad of first responders to enhance or even begin the optimum use of broadband services.

The Department of Education applied for a total of \$62.7 million for three distinct programs. The education of teachers, students and community members on broadband technology would be accomplished with \$12.5 million of their request. \$49.7 million would be used to subsidize other monies in improving the connection of broadband services among the over 500 school systems and libraries in the Commonwealth. Such improvements would diminish the disparity in service and pricing between urban and rural communities. The final \$5 million of their request would be used to expand the availability of broadband to training and support centers across the state.

A currently unserved and/or underserved area of northern Pennsylvania stands to gain, if the \$28.7 million requested by the Office of Administration is granted. The monies would allow for close to a million households in the area north of I-80 to be wholly served, by making the delivery of broadband to these homes and related businesses, schools and healthcare entities, more economically feasible for current providers.

Lastly, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, is asking for a mere \$381,360 to aid in providing broadband access and training to 1,500 veterans in six state veterans homes. The funds would provide hardware and training for these veterans.

It is encouraging to note that California, North Carolina, Vermont and Indiana have already been awarded the collective amount of \$5.9 million for statewide mapping. If you have any questions about broadband or how to bring it to your community, please do not hesitate to contact me at 1-877-LAW-2555.

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