

March 24, 2020

## House Pandemic Bill Offers Nearly \$4B in Broadband, Hot Spot Funding

House Democrats late yesterday unveiled their version of a third-phase coronavirus pandemic relief bill, which includes, among many other things, more than \$3 billion in Internet and broadband connectivity support to be administered by the FCC and more than \$280 million in funding for Department of Agriculture broadband programs.

The proposed Take Responsibility for Workers and Families Act (HR 6379) would provide \$2 billion for the FCC to allocate for “broadband hotspots and connected devices to facilitate distance learning and connectivity,” \$1 billion for the FCC to allocate “to expand access to broadband for low-income Americans,” and \$200 million for the FCC to allocate “to provide health care providers with connected devices to facilitate telemedicine services and free up hospital beds,” according to a section-by-section summary of the bill released by the office of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.).

Separately, the bill would authorize increased funding and flexibility for the FCC’s E-rate and Lifeline programs during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The bill also would repeal the requirement for the FCC to reallocate and auction the T-band (470 to 512 megahertz), “which allows first responders to continue the use of the band for their public safety communications.”

The bill would make “certain practices, including the stopping of telephone or broadband services, if a consumer is unable to pay for reasons related to the COVID-19 emergency, unlawful during the COVID-19 public health emergency.”

The bill would also provide “\$258 million for the ReConnect program and \$25 million for DLT [distance learning and telemedicine] to expand investments in telemedicine and broadband to assist in managing the coronavirus pandemic. These critical investments enhance the ability for individuals to receive healthcare through telemedicine and for students to utilize broadband service for education resources.”

The bill includes \$14.4 million “to assist interagency critical infrastructure coordination, enhance analytic capabilities supporting coronavirus response, and related activities” (see separate story).

In addition, the House bill would provide \$3 billion for “technology-related modernization projects designed to cut costs and drive efficiencies across the Federal government.”

Negotiations continued today in the Senate on that chamber’s version of a third pandemic response bill (TR Daily, March 23). —Lynn Stanton, [lynn.stanton@wolterskluwer.com](mailto:lynn.stanton@wolterskluwer.com)

*Copyright © 2020 CCH Incorporated, All Rights Reserved*