

July 8, 2020

Manchin, Collins Suggest Hot-Spot Library Lending Program

Sens. Joe Manchin (D., W.Va.) and Susan Collins (R., Maine) today announced plans to introduce in the next Senate session a bill to create a pilot program to fund library lending of hot spots and other connected devices in low-income and rural areas.

As conceived, the Hotspots and Online Technology and Services Procurement for our Tribes and States (HOTSPOTS) Act would create a two-year pilot program under the auspices of the Institute of Museum and Library Services to allocate \$160 million in grant funds to states, tribal and native Hawaiian organizations, and U.S. territories, with a minimum of \$1.6 million per state; a minimum of \$160,000 each for the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau; 2.5% of funding reserved for tribal and native Hawaiian organizations; and \$1 million allocated to the Institute of Museum and Library Services “for grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements with Federal agencies, public and private organizations, and other entities determined to be eligible by the Director to enable those agencies, organizations, and entities” to engage in partnerships to coordinate distribution of Internet-capable devices. The remaining funding would be allocated among the states in proportion to their populations.

Sen. Manchin said, “Americans and West Virginians have had to adjust to a new way of working, learning, and living from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic and for most people, this change relies on accessible, reliable broadband, which many rural Americans do not have. Senator Collins and I are introducing the HOTSPOTS Act to help address these challenges facing low-income and rural students and families forced to work from home during school and office closures.”

Organizations issuing statements of support for the bill include the American Library Association, CTIA, the Competitive Carriers Association, and the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition. — Lynn Stanton, lynn.stanton@wolterskluwer.com

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