

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007**

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SENATE BILL 1855

Short Title: WOW e-Community Funds. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Jones and Jenkins.

Referred to: Appropriations/Base Budget.

May 22, 2008

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO THE WOW E-COMMUNITY
2 DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION TO PROVIDE THE STATE WITH
3 BROADBAND ACCESSIBILITY STUDIES FOR NINE RURAL EASTERN
4 COUNTIES AS A TOOL FOR PLANNING BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT AND
5 TO ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STATE FUNDS USED FOR
6 DEPLOYMENT OF BROADBAND AND TO PROVIDE FUNDS FOR
7 BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOUR NORTHEASTERN COUNTIES
8 TO DETERMINE THE EFFICACY OF WIRELESS BROADBAND AS A
9 PREFERRED SOLUTION FOR PROVIDING THE REMOTE RURAL
10 COMMUNITIES IN NORTH CAROLINA WITH BROADBAND.
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12 Whereas, WOW e-CDC was designated by the General Assembly as the
13 Technology Resource Center for the 16 counties in the Northeast Region of North
14 Carolina; and

15 Whereas, pursuant to that mission, WOW e-CDC is an advocate for all
16 citizens in the Northeast Region having access to broadband; and

17 Whereas, WOW e-CDC was contracted to conduct a broadband study of the
18 21 Eastern North Carolina counties in the Elizabeth City State University service area to
19 ensure that its online courses would be accessible to the remote communities in Eastern
20 North Carolina; and

21 Whereas, the State of North Carolina does not have documented studies as to
22 which communities within each county have accessibility to broadband except the 21-
23 county study conducted by WOW e-CDC; and

24 Whereas, WOW e-CDC has determined by that study that the level of
25 accessibility reported to the State by telecommunications companies is inflated; and

26 Whereas, such inflation is misleading and results in rural counties not
27 receiving the infrastructure necessary to ensure its citizens broadband; and

28 Whereas, the lack of broadband negatively impacts education, business, and
29 industry in these counties; and

1 Whereas, the State of North Carolina has not determined the efficacy of
2 wireless broadband as part of its strategy for reaching the remote rural communities in
3 the State; and

4 Whereas, WOW e-CDC has successfully operated a wireless Internet service
5 in Washington County for four years; and

6 Whereas, according to the WOW e-CDC broadband accessibility study,
7 Washington County has 62% accessibility, Chowan County has 63% accessibility,
8 Bertie County has 51% accessibility, and Tyrrell County has 55% accessibility; and

9 Whereas, the county boards of commission of Washington, Chowan, and
10 Bertie Counties have passed resolutions which support the WOW e-CDC broadband
11 study, and a request for infrastructure that will facilitate broadband accessibility in the
12 remote communities within each of these counties; and

13 Whereas, deployment of wireless broadband in Washington, Chowan, Bertie,
14 and Tyrrell Counties will demonstrate both the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of
15 wireless broadband as a preferred solution for broadband accessibility in rural counties;
16 Now, therefore,

17 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

18 **SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the
19 Department of Commerce for allocation to the WOW E-Community Development
20 Corporation (WOW e-CDC) the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) for
21 the 2008-2009 fiscal year to complete broadband accessibility studies for the remaining
22 nine counties east of I-95: Brunswick, New Hanover, Onslow, Carteret, Duplin, Jones,
23 Lenoir, Wayne, and Wilson.

24 **SECTION 2.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the
25 Department of Commerce for allocation to the WOW E-Community Development
26 Corporation (WOW e-CDC) the sum of two million five hundred thousand dollars
27 (\$2,500,000) for the 2008-2009 fiscal year for infrastructure and labor to provide
28 wireless broadband accessibility to at least a documented ninety-five percent (95%) of
29 the citizens in Washington, Chowan, Bertie, and Tyrrell Counties.

30 **SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2008.