
**Technology & Economic Development
Committee**

HB 2312

Brief Description: Providing urban levels of internet speed and access in rural areas to secure a brighter more equitable economic future for all Washingtonians without increasing taxes or fees.

Sponsors: Representatives DeBolt, Kretz, Smith, Tharinger and Buys.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a reverse auction program that awards funding for high-speed Internet deployment projects in unserved and underserved rural regions.

Hearing Date: 1/17/18

Staff: Lily Smith (786-7175).

Background:

In 2015, the state of New York established a reverse auction program to award funding for high-speed Internet access projects, with a goal of statewide broadband Internet access in 2018. In a reverse auction process, bidders compete with one another to offer the lowest bid.

Consolidated Technology Services (CTS), commonly referred to as WaTech, is the Washington state agency tasked with centralized procurement and provision of information technology (IT) services. CTS provides a variety of services to state and local agencies including telecommunications and computing services, procurement of technology equipment through master contracts, and IT support functions.

Summary of Bill:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

CTS must create a reverse auction program that awards funding to high-speed internet infrastructure projects in unserved and underserved rural regions. The program must develop requests for proposals that:

- require the provision of at least one voice and broadband service with rates similar to urban areas;
- prioritize projects bringing internet access to unserved rural areas;
- prioritize projects seeking the lowest amount of state investment per new location served; and
- consider leverage of existing telecommunications infrastructure and unique solutions.

CTS and the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee must submit reports on the new program by December 1, 2021.

The Expanding Rural Internet Access account is created in the state treasury. An appropriation of \$300 million is made from the Budget Stabilization Account to the Expanding Rural Internet Access account for the new program.

Appropriation: The sum of \$300 million.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 8, 2018.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.