

Education Telecommunications Act

A bill for an act relating to education; creating an education telecommunications fund; providing support for kindergarten through grade 12 schools and public library telecommunications networks; providing for an access fee; appropriating money; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 125B.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. [125B.22] [EDUCATION TELECOMMUNICATIONS FUND.]

Subdivision 1. [FUND ESTABLISHED] An education telecommunications fund is established as an account in the state treasury. Earnings, such as interest, dividends, and any other earnings arising from fund assets, must be credited to the account.

Subd. 2 [ACCESS FEE.] A surcharge of cents per month will be added to end-user bills by communications providers for each customer wireline or wireless access line for voice or data telecommunications services.

The commissioner of revenue shall deposit the revenues, including the interest and penalties, derived from the fee imposed under this subdivision in the education telecommunications fund account.

Subd. 3 [LEARNING NETWORK.] Commencing in fiscal year 2005, the account shall fund the kindergarten through grade 12 schools and public library portions of the learning network of Minnesota formerly funded through the Minnesota department of education.

Eligible expenditures shall include telecommunication access fees, wide-area network maintenance and support costs, non-recurring installation costs, and other costs as defined by the Minnesota education telecommunications council.

Subd. 4 [MINNESOTA EDUCATION TELECOMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL.] The Minnesota education telecommunications council has oversight responsibility for the operation of the network, and must develop a funding plan consistent with the regional distribution method recommended by the 2002 permanent funding report. The METC must also establish standards for interoperability and minimum bandwidth.

Subd. 5 [E-RATES.] All kindergarten through grade 12 schools and public libraries receiving telecommunications funds from the state of Minnesota must apply for e-rate discounts through the appropriate region or cluster. Regions and clusters denied e-rate discounts will be fully funded through the education telecommunications fund account. Funds approved through the e-rate appeals process are deposited to the account.

Subd. 6 [FISCAL AGENT.] The department of education is the fiscal agent for funding programs under this section and is not authorized to, nor responsible for, the management or operation of those programs.

Subd. 7 [ADMINISTRATION.] Not more than \$200,000 each fiscal year may be expended from the account for paying the expenses of the department of education in administering this section.

Subd. 8 [APPROPRIATION.] Money in the account is appropriated to the commissioner of education for the purposes of this section. Money in the account is carried forward.