

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA**  
**SESSION 2009**

**H**

**1**

**HOUSE BILL 532**

Short Title: E-NC Connectivity/Economic Development Funds. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Tolson, Rapp, Lucas, Wilkins (Primary Sponsors); Faison, McLawhorn, Spear, Tarleton, and E. Warren.

Referred to: Ways and Means/Broadband Connectivity, if favorable, Appropriations.

March 12, 2009

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS TO THE E-NC AUTHORITY TO SUPPORT  
CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVES AND TO ADVANCE TECHNOLOGY-BASED  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** Operations, Research and Coordination. – Under Session Law 2003-425, the e-NC Authority has a mandate to be the Internet planning and policy body for the State. Therefore, there is appropriated from the General Fund to the e-NC Authority the additional sum of five hundred and five thousand dollars (\$505,000) in recurring funds for the 2009-2010 fiscal year to continue its operational, advocacy, and research functions and assistance to communities for broadband deployment. These funds will be in addition to the four hundred ninety-five thousand dollars (\$495,000) the Authority currently receives from recurring funding from the State budget. These funds will allow the e-NC Authority to continue its efforts statewide, serving as the primary advocate in North Carolina for universal high-speed Internet access and the economic growth potential possible through expanded broadband, through continuation of e-NC's operations and its work on technology-based economic development to create jobs in North Carolina. Since its inception eight years ago the e-NC Authority has received two million three hundred ninety-five dollars (\$2,395,000) in State operating support, creating an economic impact of more than three billion dollars (\$3,000,000,000) in its work to increase broadband access, using the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis metrics, and has seen more than 1,645 jobs directly created through the e-NC Business and Technology Telecenters (BTTs) since 2002. In addition, this local community impact by the Business and Technology Telecenters has seen more than two hundred twenty-one million dollars (\$221,000,000) in direct revenue impact to the economy of the seven counties that the BTTs are located in, as well as direct to the State tax revenues of more than fourteen million five hundred thousand dollars (\$14,500,000).

**SECTION 2.** Connectivity Incentive Grants – State and Federal. – There is appropriated from the General Fund to the e-NC Authority the sum of twelve million five hundred thousand dollars (\$12,500,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2009-2010 fiscal year to be used to bring communities up to the point where at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the households in all 100 counties will have the ability to access a high-speed Internet connection. These funds will allow the e-NC Authority to then work toward increasing high-speed Internet access in all North Carolina counties up to 80 percent (80%), then 90 percent (90%), and eventually, up to 100 percent (100%). These funds shall be granted through a formal request for proposals (RFP) process with a provider match required when appropriate. Up to five (5%) of this connectivity funding may be designated for grant administration. In addition, these funds



1 may be used by the e-NC Authority to assist community, public-private, and nonprofit entities  
2 who are required to provide matching funds to qualify for federal broadband stimulus monies  
3 available from the federal government.

4 **SECTION 3.** Business and Technology Telecenter (BTT) Grants. – There is  
5 appropriated from the General Fund to the e-NC Authority the sum of one million dollars  
6 (\$1,000,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2009-2010 fiscal year to continue support of its  
7 Business and Technology Telecenter program and to establish up to two new centers in  
8 underserved areas of the State. All grants to establish new centers shall be awarded through a  
9 competitive bidding process. The Telecenter program would then include:

- 10 (1) Blue Ridge Business Development Center in Sparta, Alleghany County.
- 11 (2) New Ventures Business Development, Inc., in Wadesboro, Anson County.
- 12 (3) Tri-County Community College TeleCenter in Murphy, Cherokee County.
- 13 (4) Northeast Technology and Business Center in Williamston, Martin County.
- 14 (5) The Roanoke Center in Rich Square, Northampton County.
- 15 (6) Rockingham County Business and Technology Center in Wentworth,  
16 Rockingham County.
- 17 (7) Foothills Connect Business and Technology Center in Rutherfordton,  
18 Rutherford County.
- 19 (8) New Telecenter, New town, New county.
- 20 (9) New Telecenter, New town, New county.

21 Three million one hundred ninety-two thousand five hundred dollars (\$3,192,500) in  
22 State funding has been awarded for e-NC Business and Technology Telecenter grants since the  
23 inception of the BTT program. The economic impact of the BTTs without economic multipliers  
24 being applied has been more than two hundred twenty-one million dollars (\$221,000,000) in  
25 direct dollar impact to the seven counties.

26 **SECTION 4.** Public Access & Digital Inclusion Grants. – There is appropriated  
27 from the General Fund to the e-NC Authority the sum of one million five hundred thousand  
28 dollars (\$1,500,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2009-2010 fiscal year to support public  
29 Internet access sites in communities with low levels of connectivity and to provide digital  
30 literacy programs and access to communities with low participation rates in the digital  
31 economy. These funds shall be granted through a formal request for proposals (RFP) process.  
32 These funds will be utilized to assist the public access centers refresh the technology equipment  
33 they have been using for the past five years. Their current equipment shall be refurbished and  
34 utilized by the local public access center or local school in a lending program for students who  
35 do not have a computer to take home from school.

36 **SECTION 5.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2009.