



Resolution Calling on a Reform to the E-Rate Program

WHEREAS, the E-Rate program was established in 1998 and initially provided funding and service to low income and rural schools to make sure they had access to broadband; and

WHEREAS, the E-Rate program has grown to double its allocated funds and cannot meet demands; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2011 FCC study, 80 percent of schools do not believe their broadband needs are currently being met, and roughly half of E-Rate schools access the Internet at speeds of 3 Megabits per second or less with only 5 percent offering computer science courses; and

WHEREAS, broadband-enabled technologies are now the foundation on which the world communicates. Not having such technology leaves communities, families and students at risk of not having access to opportunities that can improve their lives and ensure a competitive future for all Americans; and

WHEREAS, access to broadband in all schools and libraries will prepare America's future workforce to be globally competitive in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields and the private sector will benefit from a strong workforce that has been educated in STEM courses; and

WHEREAS, Federal Communications Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel has called for the Commission to reboot, reinvigorate, and recharge the E-rate program with the initiative, "E-rate 2.0", which would (1) redirect savings resulting from audits of the Lifeline program, into the E-rate; (2) set clear capacity goals for schools seeking E-rate funds such as by the 2015 school year, every school should have access to 100 megabits per 1,000 students and by the end of the decade, every school should have access to 1 gigabit per 1,000 students; (3) encourage more public-private sector partnerships that would help create cost-effective technologies, educational applications, and devices; and (4) create a simpler process for E-rate applications which would include allowances for multi-year applications, and those from consortia, which will reduce paperwork and administrative expenses; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that broadband technologies have the power to improve access to quality education tools and services for students, families and communities; reevaluation of the E-Rate program is imperative to increase the programs funding so that it is updated and can meet the demands of schools and libraries in every community; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that by the 2013 Legislative Summit of the NOBEL Women, assembled in Atlanta, GA, June 21, 2013, that NOBEL Women urge the Federal Communication Commission to establish the above framework for the continuous reassessment and support of the E-Rate program to expand broadband access to schools and libraries; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the NOBEL Women send a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, members of Congress, and State Legislatures and Regulatory agencies.

Submitted by:

Rep. Laura Hall (AL)

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