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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2015

JOINT RESOLUTION

RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THAT THE GOVERNOR INITIATE A COMPREHENSIVE
BROADBAND POLICY FOR THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Senators Pichardo, DiPalma, and Coyne

Date Introduced: June 24, 2015

Referred To: Placed on the Senate Consent Calendar

1 WHEREAS, High-speed internet access, also known as broadband has become an
2 essential element of economic vitality, enhancing economic development and public safety for
3 the state's communities, improving health care and educational opportunities, and providing a
4 better quality of life for our state's residents; and

5 WHEREAS, The Special Legislative Commission to Study Broadband Service and
6 Accessibility ("the Commission") has finished meeting and issued its final report based upon over
7 15 hours of testimony from 19 individuals representing government, nonprofits, and the private
8 sector; and

9 WHEREAS, The Commission examined:

- 10 • The current level of broadband service state-wide;
- 11 • The policies and actions necessary to eliminate obstacles to the investment in and the
12 identification of areas in the state that currently lack the infrastructure necessary to
13 support broadband service;
- 14 • The digital gap in both the minority and rural communities;
- 15 • Opportunities for potential public/private sector partnerships;
- 16 • Various strategies, financing methods, and financial incentives used in other states
17 and countries to support deployment of high-speed broadband;
- 18 • The security, vulnerability, and redundancy actions necessary to ensure the reliability
19 of high-speed broadband;

- 1 • Economic development opportunities made possible by the wide dissemination of
- 2 high-speed broadband;
- 3 • High-speed broadband's benefit to educational institutions, community based
- 4 organizations, and government institutions; and
- 5 • The current public centers for broadband access as well as potential future plans to
- 6 enhance access to underserved communities throughout the state; and

7 WHEREAS, The Commission deems broadband to be the 21st century highway for our
8 information economy, almost as much a life necessity as water and electricity, and universally
9 required to effectively operate and compete in the 21st century; and

10 WHEREAS, The Commission concluded that Rhode Island's broadband infrastructure is
11 extremely good, ranking near the top of every poll with regards to the speeds and quality of our
12 Internet infrastructure; and

13 WHEREAS, Analysis also revealed that there are certain areas that require improvement,
14 wherein, almost one third of Rhode Island households, require broadband adoption as they still do
15 not utilize the Internet; and

16 WHEREAS, Many of these households lack the digital literacy skills essential to
17 performing the most fundamental online functions such as e-mailing, posting resumes, searching
18 for jobs or the basics of using a computer; and

19 WHEREAS, This "Digital Divide" negatively impacts many of our most vulnerable
20 citizens especially minority and low-income households; and

21 WHEREAS, Federal programs have provided \$21 million to build broadband
22 infrastructure in places where it doesn't already exist, such as providing better Internet to our
23 community anchor institutions, and promoting Internet use, literacy and adoption for our citizens;
24 now, therefore be it

25 RESOLVED, That this General Assembly, in order to overcome this challenge as well as
26 propel Rhode Island's economic development efforts forward, hereby respectfully requests the
27 Governor to establish a task force that not only produces a Broadband Strategic Plan but also
28 reviews the Broadband Commission's recommendations in light of the broader implementation of
29 a comprehensive broadband policy for Rhode Island; and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That this General Assembly hereby further requests that establishment of a
31 comprehensive broadband strategy for Rhode Island will not only maintain the state's broadband
32 competitive advantage, but will also increase its adoption and utilization by all citizens, thus
33 increasing economic development opportunities while eliminating certain barriers to success for
34 the benefit of all of the state's residents and businesses; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
2 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Honorable Gina Raimondo, Governor of the
3 State of Rhode Island, and to the Co-Chairpersons of the Special Legislative Commission to
4 Study Broadband Service and Accessibility.

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