

HOUSE BILL 666

Introduced by Ramirez, et al.

2/13	Introduced
2/13	Referred to Appropriations
2/28	Hearing
3/18	Tabled in Committee

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INTRODUCED BY

HOUSE BILL NO.

666

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED:

"AN ACT TO DEVELOP AND

IMPLEMENT TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS IN MONTANA TO SUPPORT

EDUCATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES; TO

PROVIDE FOR DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS, PROVIDING

APPROPRIATIONS; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

WHEREAS, the appropriate use of telecommunications

technologies can have a significant impact on Montana's

economy, system of education, and accessibility to

information from neighboring states, the nation, and the

world; and

WHEREAS, an information infrastructure comprised of

both a statewide telecommunications network and various

information resources and services may overcome Montana's

traditional handicap of distance, enable new enterprises to

locate and develop in Montana, and help existing businesses

to thrive; and

WHEREAS, telecommunications technologies, including

voice, data, video, and public broadcasting systems, are

already contributing to the expansion and improvement of

many vital aspects of life in Montana, including all levels

of public and private education, numerous components of

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local and state government, and the education and business
needs of the private sector; and

WHEREAS, modern telecommunications technology can
enable citizens and their organizations to communicate in
the public life of the state, thereby improving the mutual
understanding and sense of community among Montanans; and

WHEREAS, these opportunities should be extended to all
Montanans through coordinated network planning and action;
and

WHEREAS, the Montana Telecommunications Project, funded
by the Montana Science and Technology Alliance and
administered by the Montana Ambassadors, has highlighted the
need for enhanced telecommunications networks that can
expand economic development opportunities in the state; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force on Telecommunication
Technologies formed under House Joint Resolution No. 58 of
the 50th Legislature has identified in its report to the
51st Legislature the potential for improvements in the
video, voice, and data telecommunications infrastructure
already in place; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the efforts of the Task Force,
state and local entities and private organizations
representing education, business, and government have
created a Montana Telecommunications Cooperative for the
purpose of working cooperatively toward improvements in

1 telecommunications in Montana; and

2 WHEREAS, the Task Force determined that the state
3 should commit its resources to the extent possible to
4 properly posture itself to benefit from telecommunications
5 advancements.

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7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

8 NEW SECTION. Section 1. Telecommunications network --
9 implementation -- consultant. (1) The department of
10 administration shall retain a telecommunications engineering
11 consultant to:

12 (a) support the development of design criteria and
13 specifications for statewide video networking and
14 improvements in the use of existing voice and data networks
15 in the state;

16 (b) meet the training and education needs of public
17 schools, Montana university system units, and state and
18 local government agencies; and

19 (c) meet the emerging needs for business
20 communications and economic development support.

21 (2) The telecommunications engineering consultant
22 shall:

23 (a) seek advice and recommendations on improvements in
24 telecommunications within Montana from the following
25 entities:

1 (i) the office of the superintendent of public
2 instruction;

3 (ii) the university system;

4 (iii) local government officials;

5 (iv) agencies involved in economic development; and

6 (v) the executive, judicial, and legislative branches
7 of state government; and

8 (b) recommend and initiate network improvements during
9 the biennium through shared use and enhancements of existing
10 telecommunications systems, with emphasis on limiting
11 financial commitments to the extent possible.

12 NEW SECTION. Section 2. Demonstration projects --
13 matching funds. (1) The superintendent of public instruction
14 shall:

15 (a) administer a grant program for demonstration
16 projects to improve the existing telecommunications networks
17 within Montana and to provide models for further
18 implementation of networks;

19 (b) award grants up to \$75,000 for individual
20 projects;

21 (c) give preference in the grant approval process to
22 proposed and existing partnerships among education,
23 government, and business entities.

24 (2) A match of 20% in funds or equipment is required
25 for each approved grant.

1 NEW SECTION. **Section 3.** Appropriations. (1) There is
2 appropriated from the general fund to the department of
3 administration for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1990,
4 \$200,000 to retain a telecommunications engineering
5 consultant and to support development of and improvements in
6 telecommunications networks in Montana as provided in
7 [section 1].

8 (2) There is appropriated from the general fund to the
9 department of administration for the biennium ending June
10 30, 1991, \$1,000,000 to be used for network implementation
11 and improvements if a 50% match in funds or equipment is
12 available from other sources.

13 (3) There is appropriated from the general fund to the
14 office of public instruction for the biennium ending June
15 30, 1991, \$500,000 for pilot project grants to encourage and
16 extend existing telecommunications systems, as provided for
17 in [section 2].

18 NEW SECTION. **Section 4.** Effective date. [This act] is
19 effective on passage and approval.

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