

Revisions to Pennsylvania's Telecommunications Law

House Bill 30 was signed into law on November 30, 2004 as Act 183, and took effect on December 1, 2004. Act 183 enacts an amended version of the original Chapter 30 (Alternative Form of Regulation for Telecommunications Services), which authorized the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) to permit a reduced, alternative form of regulation for incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) who promised broadband (BB) deployment by 2015. The new legislation seeks to encourage earlier completion of BB deployment by providing ILECs with more economic incentives and lesser PUC regulation. In addition, key provisions of the Act provide funding for equipping and connecting public and private schools to BB access and require some companies to offer BB access to schools at a minimum thirty percent (30%) discount. Below are some specifics:

BB Outreach & Aggregation Fund

Act 183 establishes a special fund in the Department of Treasury to provide residential consumers, health care facilities, political subdivisions, economic development entities, schools, and business with seed grants to educate communities about the procurement, use, and benefits of BB.

Education Technology Fund

Act 183 set up a special fund known as the E-fund to provide BB discounts, grants for the purchase of telecommunications equipment, and technical assistance for distance learning and other initiatives to improve educational opportunities throughout the state.

BB Discounts to Schools

Act 183 requires that any ILEC which elects to amend its network modernization plan to provide school entities with a minimum thirty percent (30%) discount on BB mileage rates when the school enters into a minimum three (3) year contract with the ILEC to provide BB service. Additionally, the ILEC is required to waive the associated nonrecurring charges for available intrastate BB services when these services are used for educational purposes. The ILEC also must assist school entities with applying for federal E-rate funding.

Clients who have questions regarding issues discussed in this article, or any education law matter, should feel free to call us at 215-345-9111.