



LEGISLATIVE BRIEF: BROADBAND ACCESS

Background

For several years private providers of broadband services have sought legislation to prevent local governments from offering the services or creating the infrastructure to enable them to do so. A number of local governments, dissatisfied with the coverage and/or quality of privately provided broadband services, have developed, or begun to develop, the services themselves.

During the 2009-10 interim, two legislative committees studied this issue. The Revenue Laws Study Commission has approved recommended legislation to prohibit local governments from using non-voted debt to finance “a communication system ... that provides broadband service or other internet access, service, cable service, telecommunications’ service, video programming service, or a combination of these services.” A second committee, the House Select Committee on High Speed Internet in Rural Areas, has been looking at the issue and is expected to continue its study after the short session adjourns.

Outlook for 2010

The Association has been supportive of local government efforts to provide broadband services to their citizens and has opposed efforts to prohibit them from doing so. We believe such decisions are best made at the local level and that local governments should not be restricted in offering services that improve the lives of their citizens and promote economic development within their communities. To prohibit local governments from providing services in an area of such rapidly developing technology is shortsighted.