

ASSEMBLY, No. 2290

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 216th LEGISLATURE

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Sponsored by:

Assemblyman WAYNE P. DEANGELO
District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS

Requires certain cable television companies to offer free Internet access to public libraries.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



A2290 DEANGELO

2

1 AN ACT concerning Internet access in public libraries and
2 supplementing P.L.1972, c.186 (C.48:5A-1 et seq.).

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

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7 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Public
8 Library Internet Access Act."

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10 2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

11 a. Access to the Internet is offered in a large number of public
12 libraries in this State;

13 b. The residents of this State increasingly use the Internet as
14 part of their daily lives as a means of obtaining news, maintaining
15 contact with family and friends, earning a livelihood, and accessing
16 online job postings and other employment information;

17 c. For many residents, the public library is the only venue
18 where they can access the Internet due to the high cost of
19 maintaining a computer system and Internet service in their homes;
20 and

21 d. The State has a compelling interest to ensure that residents
22 have access to the Internet as an important source of news and
23 economic opportunity.

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25 3. As used in P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
26 Legislature as this bill):

27 "Board" means the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities or any
28 successor agency.

29 "Franchise" means an initial authorization, or renewal thereof,
30 issued by a franchising authority in accordance with the provisions
31 of P.L.1972, c.186 (C.48:5A-1 et seq.), whether such authorization
32 is designated as a franchise, permit, license, resolution, contract,
33 certificate, agreement or otherwise, which authorizes the
34 construction or operation of a cable television system.

35 "Cable television company" or "CATV company" means any
36 person or group of persons (1) who provides cable service over a
37 cable system and directly, or through one or more affiliates, owns a
38 significant interest in such cable system, or (2) who otherwise
39 controls or is responsible for, through any arrangement, the
40 management and operation of such cable system.

41 "Internet" means the international computer network of both
42 federal and non-federal interoperable packet switched data
43 networks.

44 "Public library" means a library that serves free of charge, all
45 residents of an area without discrimination and receives its financial
46 support, in whole or in part, from public funds. "Public library"
47 does not include any special-purpose library, such as a law school,

1 medical school, or any other school or academic library, which is
2 organized to serve a special clientele or purpose.

3 "System-wide franchise" means a competitive franchise issued
4 pursuant to P.L.1972, c.186 (C.48:5A-1 et seq.) which authorizes a
5 CATV company to construct or operate a cable television system in
6 any location within this State in which the CATV company, at the
7 time of the issuance of the system-wide franchise, either has plant
8 or equipment in use for the provision of any consumer video, cable,
9 or telecommunications service, including telephone service, or has
10 proposed to place such plant or equipment into use to provide such
11 service.

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13 4. Notwithstanding any law, rule, regulation, or order to the
14 contrary, a new system-wide franchise, or new franchise agreement
15 between a cable television company and a municipality to provide
16 cable television reception service to the municipality, or a renewal
17 of such a franchise or agreement, issued or approved by the board
18 after the effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the
19 Legislature as this bill), shall require any cable television company
20 that offers Internet service to its subscribers, to provide free access
21 to Internet service to at least one public library in each municipality
22 served by the company in this State.

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24 5. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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29 This bill requires any cable television company ("CATV
30 company") that offers Internet service to its subscribers to provide
31 free Internet service to at least one public library in each
32 municipality served by the company. The free Internet service
33 requirement would take effect as part of any new system-wide
34 franchise or municipal franchise agreement, or renewal of such
35 franchise or agreement, that is issued or approved by the Board of
36 Public Utilities after the effective date of this bill.

37 The Internet is an important source of news, social interaction,
38 and employment opportunities for the public, many of whom are
39 unable to afford the high cost of maintaining a computer system and
40 Internet access in their homes. By requiring CATV companies to
41 offer free Internet service to public libraries, many members of the
42 public who are currently unable to access the Internet due to
43 difficult economic circumstances will have a convenient, low-cost
44 means of making use of the benefits and opportunities provided by
45 the Internet.