

## U.S. Congress Proposes National Technology Effort Modeled After ConnectKentucky

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The United States Congress has numerous efforts under way to establish a national initiative to replicate Kentucky's nation-leading technology development success, according to a Kentucky release. The initiative is said to be the result of [ConnectKentucky's](#) implementation of Gov. Ernie Fletcher's "Prescription for Innovation."

The bipartisan [Connect the Nation Act of 2007](#) was recently filed by Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Illinois) to encourage the rapid deployment of affordable broadband Internet service, particularly in rural areas. The legislation supports a grant program that would enable states to implement an initiative similar to ConnectKentucky, a public-private partnership leading efforts to accelerate broadband availability and technology literacy throughout the commonwealth.

The developments in Congress come amidst nationwide efforts to highlight the importance of technology and innovation in regard to America's ability to compete in the global economy. May 14-18, 2007 was proclaimed by the National Governor's Association as Innovation America week -- a time in which governors are encouraging innovation by focusing on the importance of technology for providing a quality math and science education, helping colleges and universities better prepare the workers of tomorrow and promoting investment in the businesses and entrepreneurs of the future.

"ConnectKentucky has brought together Kentucky's most innovative businesses, public agencies and educational entities to orchestrate a technology turnaround for the commonwealth," said Gov. Fletcher. "At an increasing rate, technology companies are locating in Kentucky, entrepreneurs are developing businesses in Kentucky and jobs are growing in Kentucky because the commonwealth now has the technology infrastructure and a more technology-savvy workforce to support business creation and growth."

Through the work of ConnectKentucky and its partners, Kentucky's Prescription for Innovation has led to the following successes during the last two years:

- Kentucky is recognized as the national leader in technology acceleration with the Prescription for Innovation and repeatedly acknowledged as the national model for states;

- Broadband inventory maps have been created for the entire state, promoting current coverage and allowing providers to better target unserved areas;
- Broadband availability has increased from 60 percent to 93 percent of households able to subscribe (on track to reach 100 percent by the end of 2007), representing 518,000 previously unserved households and more than 1.4 million residents that may now access broadband;
- Broadband use at home has increased 73 percent, a rate that has led the nation;
- Broadband use among Internet connected businesses rose from 65 percent to 85 percent;
- Home computer ownership grew by 20 percent while the national average rose by 4 percent;
- An unprecedented \$667 million plus in private capital investment in Kentucky telecom infrastructure;
- Nearly 2,000 home computers have been distributed to the homes of underprivileged Kentucky students through the No Child Left Offline program;
- eCommunity Leadership Teams have been established in every Kentucky county creating grassroots technology growth plans across nine sectors;
- More than 70 percent of Kentucky counties now operate or are in the process of constructing a meaningful Web presence for e-government and online citizen services, up from about 30 percent just two years ago; and
- 22,000,000+ positive media impressions have covered Kentucky technology growth.

Over the last two years, more than 14,500 total technology jobs have been created in Kentucky, said the Governor's Office. Perhaps the most appropriate place to isolate and measure the direct employment impact of broadband expansion efforts is in the Information Technology (IT) sector. During the same two year period, in the IT sector alone, Kentucky jobs have grown at the impressive rate of 3.1 percent for Kentucky versus 0.1 percent nationally.

The nationwide statistics for broadband adoption are bleak in comparison to those of Kentucky. According to a recent study released by the international Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the U.S. continues to fall in high-speed Internet rankings, dropping three places in six months to 15th out of 30 developed countries. Ranking at the top is Denmark with 67 percent of their citizens subscribing to broadband.

During recent testimony to the U.S. Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, ConnectKentucky CEO Brian Mefford said, "Kentucky, as a microcosm, has demonstrated the importance of the national broadband discussion and the relevance of technology to America's ability to compete.

"Technology has become the great equalizer, creating opportunities, fueling better education, higher quality healthcare and better quality of life -- regardless of where an individual or community happens to be located," said Mefford.

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