



**BILL HASLAM**  
GOVERNOR  
STATE OF TENNESSEE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
Thursday, January 26, 2017

CONTACT: Jennifer Donnals  
OFFICE: (615) 741-3763

**HASLAM ANNOUNCES TENNESSEE BROADBAND ACCESSIBILITY ACT**  
*Proposal part of governor's NextTennessee legislative agenda*

NASHVILLE – Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam today announced legislation to increase broadband access to Tennessee's unserved citizens. Tennessee currently ranks 29th in the U.S. for broadband access, with 34 percent of rural Tennessee residents lacking access at recognized minimum standards.

"From the farmer and the accountant in West Tennessee whose businesses are stifled, to the East Tennessee student who can't complete her schoolwork at home, a lack of reliable internet access is preventing too many rural Tennesseans, rural communities and our state from reaching its full potential," Haslam said. "While there is no one solution that can guarantee broadband accessibility to every single Tennessean, this legislation provides a reasonable, responsible path to improve access in a meaningful way through investment, deregulation and education."

The Tennessee Broadband Accessibility Act, along with Haslam's proposed budget, will provide \$45 million over three years in grants and tax credits for service providers to assist in making broadband available to unserved homes and businesses. In addition, the plan will permit Tennessee's private, nonprofit electric cooperatives to provide retail broadband service and make grant funding available to the state's local libraries to help residents improve their digital literacy skills and maximize the benefits of broadband.

The legislation comes after a year of study and stakeholder conversations by the administration. In July 2016, the Department of Economic and Community Development released a commissioned study assessing broadband in Tennessee and options for increasing access and utilization. In addition, a draft report issued by the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR), which completed extensive work on the subject of broadband accessibility and adoption, significantly contributed to Haslam's broadband proposal.

The Tennessee Broadband Accessibility Act is part of Haslam's NextTennessee legislative plan aimed at building and sustaining economic growth and the state's competitiveness for the next generation of Tennesseans. The governor will announce additional proposals during his annual State of the State address to the General Assembly on January 30.

###