

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# 117th MAINE LEGISLATURE

## FIRST REGULAR SESSION-1995

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Legislative Document

No. 828

H.P. 618

House of Representatives, March 14, 1995

**An Act to Provide Public Access to the Information Superhighway  
through Enhanced Library Telecommunications.**

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Reference to the Committee on Utilities and Energy suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph W. Mayo".

JOSEPH W. MAYO, Clerk

Presented by Representative TREAT of Gardiner.

Cosponsored by Representatives: ADAMS of Portland, CHARTRAND of Rockland, CHASE of China, DAGGETT of Augusta, DAVIDSON of Brunswick, GATES of Rockport, GERRY of Auburn, GREEN of Monmouth, GREENLAW of Standish, HARTNETT of Freeport, HATCH of Skowhegan, JOSEPH of Waterville, KILKELLY of Wiscasset, KONTOS of Windham, LaFOUNTAIN of Biddeford, MADORE of Augusta, MARTIN of Eagle Lake, MAYO of Bath, MITCHELL of Vassalboro, PERKINS of Penobscot, ROWE of Portland, SAXL of Bangor, SHIAH of Bowdoinham, STEVENS of Orono, TOWNSEND of Portland, VOLENIK of Sedgwick, WATSON of Farmingdale, Senators: CAREY of Kennebec, CARPENTER of York, ESTY of Cumberland, GOLDTHWAIT of Hancock, HARRIMAN of Cumberland, HATHAWAY of York, LAWRENCE of York, McCORMICK of Kennebec, O'DEA of Penobscot, PARADIS of Aroostook.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §7101, sub-§1,** as enacted by PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. 000, §1, is amended to read:

**1. Universal service.** The Legislature declares and finds that the 50-year effort to bring affordable, universally available telephone service to the public has served the State well; universal telephone service has contributed to the State's economic, social and political integration and development; the public benefits from universal telephone service because each telephone subscriber receives a more valuable service when virtually anyone else in the State can be called; and a significant rate increase may threaten universal service by forcing some Maine people to discontinue their telephone service. It is the policy of the State that telephone service must continue to be universally available, especially to the poor, at affordable rates. It is also the policy of this State to promote community interaction and the sharing of knowledge and information through public access to all telecommunications technologies and networks to the extent that this policy does not interfere with universal telephone service at affordable rates.

**Sec. 2. 35-A MRSA §7101, sub-§2, ¶¶B and C,** as enacted by PL 1993, c. 410, Pt. 000, §1, are amended to read:

B. Employ methods of regulation that encourage the development and deployment of new technologies; and

C. Encourage acceptable service applications that support economic development initiatives or otherwise improve the well-being of Maine citizens; and

**Sec. 3. 35-A MRSA §7101, sub-§2, ¶D** is enacted to read:

D. Promote community interaction and the sharing of knowledge and information by facilitating expanded public access to all telecommunications technologies and networks.

**Sec. 4. 35-A MRSA §7101, sub-§3,** as amended by PL 1993, c. 638, §1, is repealed.

**Sec. 5. 35-A MRSA §7307** is enacted to read:

**§7307. Library access plans**

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Title, the commission shall develop by rule or order before January 1, 1996 one or more library access plans consistent with the provisions of this section. The plans must promote expanded public access

2 to advanced telecommunications technologies and information  
3 networks by ensuring affordable access by qualified public  
4 libraries to these technologies and networks.

6 1. Options. In adopting any library access plan under this  
7 section the commission shall examine at least the following:

8 A. Reduced telephone rates for qualified public libraries;

10 B. Reduced service and equipment charges for qualifying  
11 public libraries for installation of telephone lines and  
12 other equipment installed by a telephone utility;

14 C. Option plans that allow qualified public libraries to:

16 (1) Join together for the purposes of receiving  
17 telecommunications equipment and services at reduced  
18 rates;

20 (2) Purchase blocks of time; or

22 (3) Enter into other payment arrangements with a  
23 telephone utility; and

24 D. The development of a special library access fund to which  
25 telephone utilities are required to contribute and that is  
26 available to qualified public libraries to assist in paying  
27 the costs of acquiring and using advanced telecommunications  
28 technologies.

30 2. Definitions. For purposes of this section, the term  
31 "qualified public library" means any public library, as defined  
32 in Title 27, section 110, any research center, as defined in  
33 Title 27 section 110, and any library operated by a public  
34 school, as defined in Title 20-A, section 1, that provides free  
35 public access to all advanced telecommunication services to which  
36 a library access plan adopted by the commission under this  
37 section applies.

## 40 **STATEMENT OF FACT**

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43 This bill establishes a new state policy to promote public  
44 access to new telecommunications technologies and information  
45 networks. This bill requires the Public Utilities Commission to  
46 develop library access plans to promote affordable public access  
47 to advanced telecommunications technologies and networks. The  
48 commission is required to consider a variety of options,  
49 including:

50 1. Reduced telephone rates for qualified public libraries;

2           2. Reduced service and equipment charges for installation of  
telephone lines and other equipment installed by a telephone  
4 utility for qualified public libraries;

6           3. Option plans which allow qualified public libraries to  
purchase blocks of time or to enter into other payment  
8 arrangements with a telephone utility; and

10          4. The development of a special library access fund to which  
telephone utilities would be required to contribute and that  
12 would be available to qualified public libraries to assist in  
paying the costs of acquiring and using advanced  
14 telecommunications technologies.

16          The bill defines a qualified public library as any public  
library, public research center or school library that provides  
18 free public access to the telecommunications technologies to  
which a library plan applies.