



Tech Bills Advance in Congress

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By Roy Mark

Three bills favored by the technology sector won committee approvals Oct. 30 in the Senate and House of Representatives.

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 An advertisement for the HP StorageWorks 1200 All-in-One Storage System. The background is blue. In the center is a photograph of the storage system. Below the photo, text reads "The HP StorageWorks 1200 All-in-One Storage System" and "Powered by the Dual-Core Intel® Xeon® Processor". In the top right corner is the Intel Xeon Inside logo with the slogan "Dual-core. Do more.". At the bottom, it says "Visit Storage Utopia" and features the HP logo.

The House Committee on Energy and Commerce approved a measures to allow municipalities to provide broadband Internet access and improve 911 VOIP (voice over IP) calls and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation passed measures to create a new method for determining broadband penetration.

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The Community Broadband Act of 2007, approved by the Senate committee, would keep state or local authorities from prohibiting cities from starting their own broadband services. The bill would also require a municipality offering high-speed Internet services to comply with any federal telecommunications law or regulation that applies to private providers.

Supporters of the legislation contend the bill would allow municipalities to help fill voids in broadband access, particularly in rural areas.

"Broadband services are essential to providing important educational and economic opportunities,

especially for rural areas," Sen. Ted Stevens, R.-Alaska, said in a statement. "This bill would make it easier for municipalities, cities and towns across our nation to offer broadband access to their residents through public-private partnerships."

The legislation now moves to a full Senate vote. Similar legislation is pending in the House.

Broadband Census

The Broadband Census of America Act of 2007, approved by the House committee, provides for a comprehensive mapping of nationwide broadband access in the United States and authorizes funding and grants to local planning entities to increase broadband deployment at the local level.

To read about how Congress has forbid IT from working with repressive regimes, click here.

"This legislation reflects the growing consensus—if not unanimity—around the fact that current data collection methods used by the Federal Communications Commission are inadequate and highly flawed," Rep. Ed Markey, D. Mass., said in a statement. "We must have more reliable information about broadband deployment and consumer adoption as a first step in developing any comprehensive blueprint for America's broadband future."

According to Markey, the bill's author and chairman of the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet, once the broadband map is completed, consumers would be able to find which service providers are available in their areas.

"If America hopes to catch up with the rest of the broadband world, we can't have policymakers flying blind with respect to where service is and isn't deployed, the speeds of such services and consumer adoption rates," Markey said. "A national, searchable map will assist local communities to assess their own broadband inventory."

The Committee on Energy and Commerce also approved the 911 Modernization and Public Safety Act of 2007 (H.R. 3403) to bring emergency calling services for users of VOIP services.

"These bills signify important steps Congress is taking in response to evolving technology," John Dingell, chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, said in a statement. "Consumers will have access to emergency operators regardless of the type of service they use to dial 911 and our ability to ensure that all Americans have access to affordable broadband services will be greatly improved."

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