

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 14
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

One of the most pressing current challenges for rural Texas is the lack of access to high speed Internet. For decades, large swaths of rural Texas have waited patiently for high speed Internet to make it to their area, but the economics have simply not made sense for providers to come and serve. So, much of Texas remains without this critical service—an essential for everyday life and for businesses.

S.B. 14 empowers Texas electric cooperatives to deploy broadband to the members they serve by allowing them to utilize their existing electricity easements. Electric cooperatives are member-owned non-profits that have over 300,000 miles of distribution lines throughout rural Texas. This bill harnesses that existing infrastructure to allow co-ops to address the newest wave of critical need for their member owners—high speed Internet.

As proposed, S.B. 14 amends current law relating to use of an electric cooperative's easements or property for broadband service.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 181, Utilities Code, by adding Section 181.048, as follows:

Sec. 181.048. ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BROADBAND FACILITIES. (a) Defines "broadband service."

(b) Authorizes an electric cooperative organized under Chapter 161 (Electric Cooperative Corporations) or an electric cooperative affiliate to construct, operate, and maintain cables and other facilities for providing broadband service over, under, across, on, or along real property, personal property, rights-of-way, and easements owned, held, or used by the cooperative. Authorizes an easement or other property right owned, held, or used by the electric cooperative to provide electricity or other services to also be used to provide broadband service.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.