



Legislative Issue Briefs, a service of AESAs, are intended to help members of ESAs in their role as advocates for education.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE ISSUE BRIEF: E RATE

MARCH, 2017

Policy Context: While Congress is not poised to make any changes to E-Rate, we want to ensure that they know what E-Rate is; how schools and libraries use it; why the program matters; that it is working and is important and; what would happen to schools if the program were reduced or cut. The goal of this advocacy action is awareness - to put this issue on Congress' radar as a program to know and a program to support!

Background: E-Rate provides \$3.9 billion in discounts annually to ensure that all public libraries and K-12 public and private schools gain access to broadband connectivity and robust internal Wi-Fi. As of December 31, 2015, schools and libraries have received over \$31 billion in E-Rate funds. The promise of the E-Rate program is straightforward: to assure that all Americans, regardless of income or geography, can participate in and benefit from new information technologies, including distance learning, online assessment, web-based homework, enriched curriculum, increased communication between parents, students and their educators, and increased access to government services and information. The E-Rate program provides discounts to public and private schools, public libraries and consortia of those entities on Internet access and internal networking. (E-Rate's previous support for voice services terminates after Program Year 2018.) E-Rate discounts are provided through the Federal Communications Commission by assessing telecommunication carriers for a total of up to \$3.9 billion dollars annually. This methodology follows a long-established Universal Service Fund model, used to ensure affordable access to telephone services for residents in all areas of the nation since 1934. (Source: <https://www.edlinc.org/frequently-asked-questions>)

Talking Points:

- Though Congress has no role in determining the changes to E-Rate, they do engage in conversations with the FCC Commissioners. As such, make sure your Senators and Representatives know the critical role that E-Rate dollars play in school connectivity and how important those dollars will be as schools prepare for the online assessments.
- Did you know? E-Rate is the third largest stream of federal resources in the country, after Title I and IDEA. Check out E-Rate funding in your state!
- E-Rate played a critical role in the rapid and significant expansion of connectivity in schools, and the 2014 modernization was a much needed update to ensure more schools and libraries are connected to broadband.
- Talk about how your district uses its E-Rate funding, how it supports your district's learning and teaching, and what it would mean if E-Rate were cut.