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✓ **Wednesday**
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REPRESENTATIVES PUSH ACCESS IDEA

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

SB1277 Do Pass

■(GIT) To the unprepared it might have looked like Super Bowl Sunday on the rotunda of the state capitol Wednesday—Groups of men and women gathered around televisions, talking, laughing and sometimes shouting.

That, however, was not the case.

Wednesday was Telecommunications Day at the capitol, and the rotunda was filled with various participants displaying and demonstrating various technologies, including telemedicine, telecommunication, distance learning and the latest in Internet technology. It was also the day chosen by representatives Abe Deutschendorf, D-Lawton, and Fred Perry, R-Tulsa, to unveil a plan to increase the public's computer access to the capitol.

Speaking before the House's Science and Technology Committee, Deutschendorf said, "We have a vision of making Oklahoma number one in technology infrastructure and technology."

Deutschendorf's sentiments were echoed by Perry, who said the committee and the House should not only talk about such a program, but should do something about it.

As a starting point, the Lawton Democrat said the House should look at itself and consider what it could do to improve public access to the House and its actions via computer modem.

Specifically, Deutschendorf and Perry said they believed the House should move toward adding short titles to the Capitol's Internet home page, and moving toward a day when complete bill texts, as well as the state's statutes, would be available on the Internet.

"That would be an incredible statement for the state of Oklahoma," he said. "We need to seize the moment."

Perry and Deutschendorf were joined before the committee by Steve Shieven, superintendent of Frontier Public Schools, and Frontier High School senior Jeffery Fillmore.

Shieven said the rural school, with some 400 students, was now a "technology based institution," relying on the Internet for a variety of services and educational programs.

Fillmore said the school's computer system, which includes computers with Internet access in every classroom, "made education more fun." He also encouraged other school systems to begin using similar technology.

Fillmore, who once attended another school, said his move to Frontier had provided him with a view of classrooms with and without computers.

"I would rather be on this side," he said, referring to Frontier and its computer system.

Lawmakers, various staff members and others, meanwhile, were in the rotunda, examining the various programs and services on display. Some watched as the Wednesday session of the Senate was broadcast to the rotunda and classrooms across the state. Others sampled teleconferences and various computer access programs.

In other business before the Science and Technology Committee, **SB1277** received a do pass recommendation. The bill, by Sen. Keith Leftwich, D-Oklahoma City, and Rep. Joe Hutchison, D-Jay, authorizes the Department of Transportation to engage in negotiations regarding contracts for the use of certain rights of way.

The measure, Hutchison told the committee, would allow the installation of fiber optic cable through the state. That cable, he noted, could be used as part of a technological link from Canada to Mexico.