

AN ACT

RELATING TO EDUCATION; PROVIDING FOR A TASK FORCE TO DEVELOP A STATEWIDE DISTANCE EDUCATION INITIATIVE TO ENHANCE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND WORK FORCE TRAINING FOR WELFARE RECIPIENTS AND OTHERS; PROVIDING POWERS AND DUTIES FOR THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION; MAKING APPROPRIATIONS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

Section 1. DISTANCE EDUCATION--WORK FORCE TRAINING--  
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION DUTIES--TASK FORCE. --

A. The commission on higher education shall coordinate a statewide distance education initiative, including vocational education, to enhance work force training for welfare recipients and others, including paying the cost of connecting post-secondary educational institutions around the state through the emergency access fiber optic line of the national guard armories.

B. The commission shall establish a task force made up of representatives from:

- (1) state and local armory boards;
- (2) the economic development department;
- (3) the labor department;
- (4) the state department of public

education;

- (5) the human services department;
- (6) business and industry around the state;

and

- (7) post-secondary educational

institutions.

C. The task force shall assist the commission by:

- (1) identifying career opportunities in different areas of the state;
- (2) identifying what kind of education is needed in those areas and designing courses to fit area needs; and

- (3) determining the best methods of delivering distance education in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

D. The task force shall develop and the commission shall implement a vocational education program to meet the work activity needs of welfare recipients in accordance with state and federal law.

E. The commission shall study the cost of providing national guard members scholarships for distance education programs developed pursuant to this section as an incentive for local armories to participate in the program through the use of the emergency access fiber optic line.

F. The commission and the task force may evaluate the participation of public schools in the distance

education initiative.

Section 2. APPROPRIATIONS. --

A. Three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) is appropriated from the general fund to the commission on higher education for expenditure in fiscal years 1999 and 2000 to carry out the provisions of Section 1 of this act, including connecting post-secondary educational institutions around the state through the emergency access fiber optic line of the national guard armories. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2000 shall revert to the general fund.

B. Three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) is appropriated from the general fund to the department of military affairs for expenditure in fiscal years 1999 and 2000 to connect post-secondary educational institutions around the state through the emergency access fiber optic line of the national guard armories. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2000 shall revert to the general fund. \_\_\_\_\_