Congressional Research Service

Appropriations: National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

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The President has requested that the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) receive a budget of $57 million for FY2005, up from $51 million appropriated for FY2004. For Salaries and Expenses, the Bush Administration has requested $22 million. For the Technologies Opportunities Program, the Administration has requested the continued outlays of $16 million that Congress appropriated for FY2004, which would be carried over to FY2005, but with no new funding. For the Public Telecommunications Facilities, Planning and Construction, the Administration has requested $3 million to complete current program functions and a transfer of this program to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The Bush Administration has also requested an additional $16 million in spectrum management and telecommunications research for NTIA in FY2005. On July 1, the House Appropriations Committee approved the following for the FY2005 appropriations: the overall budget of NTIA at $17.8 million; Salaries and Expenses at $15.3 million; Technologies Opportunities Program, no new funding, and Public Telecommunications, Facilities, Planning and Construction at $2.5 million.

The NTIA is the executive branch's principal advisory office on domestic and international telecommunications and information technology issues and policies. It has as its mandate to provide greater access for all Americans to telecommunications services; to support U.S. attempts to open foreign markets; to advise on international telecommunications negotiations; to fund research grants for new technologies and their applications; and to assist non-profit organizations converting to digital transmission in the 21st century. The NTIA also manages federal use of radio frequency spectrum domestically and internationally.

NTIA's overall budget has three major components: Salaries and Expenses, the Technology Opportunity Program (TOP), and the Public Telecommunications Facilities, Planning and Construction (PTFPC) program. Salaries and Expenses largely relate to administrative functions, maintaining domestic and international policy development, and spectrum management. The TOP is a competitive, merit-based matching grant program to develop information and telecommunications infrastructure. The PTFPC program assists public broadcast stations and other non-profit stakeholders in constructing facilities to bring educational and cultural programs to the public, and is a competitive, merit-based grant program.

Among the issues being considered by policymakers is whether more of the policies and programs related to public broadcast transmission, public television infrastructure construction and conversion of television broadcasts from analog to digital technologies should be given to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Some have also argued that NTIA's role in spectrum management responsibilities should be broadened and expanded to include greater coordination across the federal government

through an expanded budget and resources.

For Additional Reading

CRS Report RS21469(pdf), *The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA): Budget, Programs, and Issues*, by Glenn J. McLoughlin.