

Internet - VP E-Society

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VICE PRESIDENT GORE ANNOUNCES EFFORTS TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE ON-LINE SERVICES

Encourages Federal-Private Partnerships to Make Government Services More Accessible

Washington, D.C. -- Vice President Gore announced today two bold new initiatives to expand the benefits of the digital age to all Americans.

Specifically, the Vice President announced the signing of two new executive memorandums. The first, the "E-Government Directive", calls on federal agencies to use technology to ensure that governmental services and information are easily accessible to the American people. The second, the "E-Society Directive", calls on federal agencies to use information technology to help enrich the education and lives of all our citizens (see attached fact sheet). Under both directives, federal agencies will work cooperatively with the private sector.

The Vice President also released *Towards Digital eQuality*, the Second Annual Report of the Electronic Commerce Working Group, which details the Administration's accomplishments over the past year promoting electronic commerce and sets a vision for the future. Highlights include steps taken to protect consumer rights and privacy online, facilitate the growth of the Internet, and bring the benefits of electronic commerce to more people.

The growth of electronic commerce has outpaced even the most optimistic predictions and is now expected to exceed \$1.4 trillion by the year 2003. During this holiday season alone, shoppers are expected to spend about \$6 billion online.

The new initiatives announced today, however, take us beyond the commercial aspects of electronic commerce and challenge us to use technology to better society through improved health care, education, emergency response, protecting our cultural treasures, and improving government services and accountability to citizens.

"This Administration has been committed to promoting electronic commerce, helping open the door to those with good ideas and an Internet connection," said Vice President Gore. "But in order to meet the full potential of this new medium, we must continue to look ahead and develop new ways to promote 21st century commerce."

These two new initiatives, together with the directive announced last week on closing the digital divide, will be a central part of the Administration's agenda on electronic commerce for

the upcoming year. The agenda will challenge both government and the private sector to find new ways to bring the promise of the Internet to all and move America towards digital equality.

Each initiative "moves us beyond the world of bits and bytes and into the fabric of our society," Vice President Gore said. "As we enter the new millennium, we must use technology to unleash the full benefits of the digital age for all our citizens."

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PRESIDENT CLINTON AND VICE PRESIDENT GORE: TOWARDS DIGITAL EQUALITY – A COMPACT FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Today, the Vice President announced two bold new initiatives for the Administration's future work on electronic commerce. The first instructs various federal agencies – in cooperation with the private sector – to expand the benefits of information technology to enrich the education and the lives of all our citizens. The second strives to tap this new technology to strengthen our civil society by providing better, more efficient government services and increased government accountability to its citizens. Together with the initiative announced last week on closing the digital divide, these new directives will help bring the promise of the Internet to all people and move us towards digital equality. Vice President Gore also released *Towards Digital Equality*, the Second Annual Report of the Administration's Electronic Commerce Working Group.

1. Building the E-Society

Ensuring that all our citizens have access to the Internet has become a social as well as an economic imperative. The Internet gives us unprecedented access to education, training, and health care. It has become a medium for sharing experiences and a powerful tool for addressing our greatest social challenges.

Information technology already is being used to make it easier for working adults to acquire new skills, increase access to health care in isolated rural communities, and improve the quality of life for people with disabilities.

- Caregivers for people with Alzheimer's use the Internet to lend each other moral support.
- Workers in high-tech companies help students improve their performance in math and science and go on to college by serving as tele-mentors.
- Doctors use interactive tutorials to learn key terms they can use with Spanish-speaking tuberculosis patients.
- Middle-aged adults use the Internet to earn contractor's licenses and computers to prepare bids.

Government programs also have made significant progress harnessing the power of information technology to meet broad societal objectives. For example, the Administration has:

- Led a national effort to ensure that all our children are technologically literate.
- Worked to connect every classroom to the Internet.
- Trained teachers to prepare them for the digital classroom.

While technology is not the answer to all of society's ills, its constructive use deserves a more prominent place among our national priorities. Recognizing the power of the Internet to positively affect our society and our quality of life, the directive on E-Society will harness this technology to:

- Expand access to higher-quality, more cost-effective health care.
- Make it easier for parents to evaluate the performance of schools in their communities.
- Make it easier for adults struggling to balance the demands of work and family to take advantage of distance learning opportunities and earn academic credentials.

- Help Americans with disabilities through such technologies as speech recognition and text-to-speech programs.
- Improve our ability to detect and respond to natural and man-made disasters.
- Expand access to our national cultural treasures over the Internet.

2. Making Government Click

The same historic forces that are transforming our economy and society also are transforming our government. The Digital Revolution is making it easier than ever for citizens to access government services and information while increasing the responsiveness of our government leaders. As we enter the next century the American people deserve nothing less than a government that keeps pace with the dramatic changes that are taking place online in the delivery of information, services and savings.

This administration already has succeeded in putting a wealth of information online. Through the Internet, citizens can:

- Download and retrieve publications and forms as well as file taxes.
- Look for federal job postings.
- Apply for financial aid.
- Access environmental information specific to local neighborhoods.
- Make reservations at over 50,000 campsites and facilities.
- Apply to be a Peace Corps volunteer.
- Contact their elected leaders.
- Communicate securely and privately with government agencies.

But the Administration recognizes that there is more work to be done. Online today you can order a book with a click, refinance a house in a day, or sign a contract across the globe. Yet when it comes to many federal services, it can still take a paper form and weeks of processing to change an address. Also, while many agencies have superb Web sites, there is still no single point for accessing all government services and information. Too often citizens have to know which agency provides a particular service or collects certain information before they can successfully target their online search.

The directive on electronic government will strengthen civil society by using technology to allow government to better serve the needs of its citizens. This new initiative will:

- Put a "virtual" government field office open 24 hours a day, seven days a week on every desktop by creating a single portal for accessing government information.
- Eliminate the need to stand in government lines by making available online the forms needed for the top 500 government services by December 2000.
- Make government leaders more accountable by creating public e-mail addresses through which citizens can contact agency heads with questions, comments, or concerns.
- Make democracy more accessible to its citizens by undertaking a one-year study of the feasibility of online voting.
- Save taxpayers money by encouraging Federal Agencies to use e-commerce wherever appropriate.

Administration's E-Commerce Accomplishments

The report the Vice President released today details the Administration's accomplishments over the past year promoting electronic commerce. These include:

Protecting Consumer Rights, Privacy, and Security: The growth of electronic commerce over the last few years has exceeded all expectations. But this rapid growth is unlikely to continue unless consumers can shop on the Web with confidence. Expanding the digital economy means assuring shoppers their communications are secure, their personal data is protected, they will get what they paid for, and the underlying infrastructure is stable no matter where they shop on the Internet. Bolstering consumer confidence means strengthening self-regulatory mechanisms and enforcing existing law.

The Administration has:

- Increased effective consumer protection online by encouraging industry self regulation and the aggressive prosecution of fraudulent practices and misleading advertising in the online marketplace under existing consumer protection laws.
- Successfully promoted codes of conduct developed and enforced by the private sector as the most effective way to protect privacy online. In just over a year, websites with privacy policies or information practice statements have jumped from 14% to 66%. The Administration also has supported expanded legal protection for medical records, financial records, and children's privacy.
- Changed the Administration's encryption policy to provide U.S. firms new opportunities to sell encryption products abroad, and bring the benefits of strong encryption to individuals and businesses using the Net around the world, while protecting the legitimate interests of public safety and national security agencies.
- Bolstered the security and reliability of the underlying telecommunications infrastructure through the President's Critical Infrastructure Program.
- Worked with various industry sectors, international organizations, and countries around the world to ensure that Y2K problems do not threaten the vital telecommunications and information processing systems upon which electronic commerce depends

Facilitating the Growth of the Internet: The Administration's legislative accomplishments this year included a number of successes that will help to facilitate the growth of the Internet and electronic commerce through continued investment and innovation in the high tech industry, including:

- A 5-year extension of the research and experimentation tax credit, the longest extension ever, which will stimulate new private sector investment in research and development. This measure encourages technological advancement, leads to higher productivity, and helps generate new American jobs.
- Important investments in long-term research and development in areas such as information technology and the Next Generation Internet.

- Reform of our patent system that will be good for the nation's innovative companies and entrepreneurs.

In addition, the Administration took important steps to promote the growth of the Internet by furthering pro-competitive policies. Specifically, the Administration:

- Promoted the deployment of high speed Internet services to all Americans by advocating policies that ensure that competitors can enter these markets and by supporting policies that would eliminate regulation that could inhibit the deployment of new facilities.
- Successfully negotiated market opening agreements for telecommunications services and information technology products that are the building blocks for electronic commerce and built an emerging consensus that World Trade Organization rules and commitments, and their liberalizing effects, apply to e-commerce.
- Concluded agreements with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and Network Solutions Inc. (NSI) which will allow the further development of the domain name space and the competitive provision of new domain name registration services increasing consumer choices and decreasing prices

Promoting a Global Framework for Electronic Commerce: With the release of the *Framework for Global Electronic Commerce*, President Clinton and Vice President Gore set in motion a worldwide debate on how policymakers should approach electronic commerce. Over the past year, foreign governments, multilateral organizations, and private sector groups increasingly have joined a growing consensus that the *Framework* principles represent the most appropriate response to the challenges of the new information economy.

- The *Framework* principles, which embrace private sector leadership and a minimalist role for government, have increasingly been adopted by countries around the world. Since the release of the *Framework* principles, the United States has entered into bilateral agreements with countries around the world embracing these principles. The *Framework* principles also have shaped work plans, guidelines, tools, and policy recommendations in organizations as diverse as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).
- The Administration also made significant progress towards achieving a consensus to extend the moratorium on tariffs on electronic transmissions at the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Third Ministerial Conference which opened in Seattle in November 1999. WTO Members expect to formally adopt this consensus position when the Third Ministerial resumes.

From Digital Divide to Digital Opportunity: Currently, households with incomes of \$75,000 and higher, in urban areas, are more than *twenty times* as likely to have access to the Internet than rural households at the lowest income levels, and more than *nine times* as likely to have a computer at home. Black and Hispanic households are two-fifths as likely to have Internet access as white households. As information technology plays an ever-increasing role in Americans' economic and social lives, we cannot and will not leave anyone behind. Some of the initiatives taken by the Administration include:

- Tripled investment in Community Technology Centers from \$10 million in FY99 to \$32.5 million in FY00.
- Increased the number of classrooms connected to the Internet from 3 percent in 1994 to 51 percent in 1998.
- Implemented the “e-rate” (part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996) which provided \$2.25 billion annually for 20% - 90% discounts on telecommunications to connect schools and libraries to the Internet, with the deepest discounts going to the poorest schools that need it most.
- Encouraged the growth of the Internet and electronic commerce in the developing world by providing assistance to a select group of countries enabling them to use the Internet to energize their economies, gain access to knowledge that can improve standards of living, and foster the free flow of ideas.