

## Memorandum on the Use of Information Technology December 17, 1999

*Memorandum for the Heads of Executive  
Departments and Agencies*

*Subject:* Use of Information Technology to  
Improve Our Society

The Internet and other information and communications technologies are changing the way we work, learn, communicate with each other, and do business. These technologies are shaping our economy and our society in the same way that the steam engine and electricity defined the Industrial Age.

In recent years, information technology has driven the U.S. economy. Businesses are scrambling to use the Internet to increase productivity, boost exports, cut the time required to develop new products, and forge closer relationships with customers and suppliers. My Administration has pursued a market-led approach to global electronic commerce that relies whenever possible on private sector leadership and seeks to eliminate legal and regulatory barriers to electronic commerce while protecting the public interest.

The Internet has the potential to enhance civil society as well as to boost commerce. Used creatively, the Internet and information technology can be a powerful tool for tackling some of our toughest social challenges as well as fostering economic growth. Information technology can and is being used to make it easier for working adults to acquire new skills, increase access to healthcare in isolated rural communities, improve the quality of life for people with disabilities, and strengthen our democracy.

My Administration has led the effort to explain and support the commercial and societal benefits of information technology to the American people. However, we can and must do more. To that end, I am directing executive department and agency heads in this memorandum to take certain actions. As they carry out these actions, they should: (a) adopt policies that will remove barriers to private sector investment in Internet applications; (b) explore partnerships with companies, State, local, and tribal governments, and other entities, such as non-profit organizations and universities; (c) explore innovative mechanisms for fostering a national discussion on the potential of the electronic soci-

ety; (d) consider other policies to promote the electronic society, such as the establishment of national goals; and (e) review the recommendations of the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee, particularly as they relate to support for information technology applications with broad societal benefits.

Therefore, to further promote the broader social benefits of the Information Age to the American people, I direct the officials in this memorandum to take the following actions:

1. The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall identify additional steps that can be taken to promote expanded access to higher quality, cost-effective health care to underserved rural communities and inner city clinics, and other health-care applications of information technology.
2. The Secretary of Education shall support and encourage States and local communities to make "school report cards" available on the Internet. The Secretary of the Interior shall make it possible for "school report cards" on Bureau of Indian Affairs schools and tribally controlled schools to be available on the Internet.
3. The Secretaries of Education and Labor shall work with States and institutions of higher education to remove legal and regulatory barriers to high-quality distance learning, to increase awareness of the availability of distance learning as an alternative means of education and training, and to find ways to promote the earning of credentials through distance learning. The Secretary of Education shall assist the Tribal Colleges and Universities in developing associate and baccalaureate programs in information technology, using innovative distance learning technology.
4. The Secretary of Education shall propose the next phase of my Administration's Educational Technology Initiative. The next phase should address teacher training, the integration of technology in the curriculum, the evaluation of technology, the market for educational software and web content, the need for more multimedia computers in the classroom, and the need

- for investments in educational technology research and development.
5. The Secretary of Labor shall determine how telecommuting might be used to help more disabled Americans get jobs and to provide jobs for Americans located in geographic regions outside traditional commuting areas, including isolated tribal communities.
  6. The Secretary of Education and the Director of the National Science Foundation shall develop a research agenda for making the Internet and information technology more usable by persons with disabilities. The Secretary of Commerce shall encourage the private sector to make web content, software, and development tools more accessible for people with disabilities by adopting technical standards consistent with the Web Accessibility Initiative.
  7. The Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency shall develop a national strategy for promoting environmental applications of information technology (such as disseminating information about manufacturing techniques that reduce pollution, and increasing the timeliness of environmental information).
  8. The Secretary of Agriculture shall identify services that can be delivered electronically to rural Americans (such as the results of Federally funded research at our Nation's land-grant universities), and develop the policies needed to promote the availability of advanced telecommunications services in rural and tribal communities.
  9. The Secretary of Commerce shall identify policies that will encourage more effective use of information technology by nonprofit organizations.
  10. The Secretary of the Treasury, in coordination with appropriate Federal agencies and private sector stakeholders, shall identify policy initiatives that promote greater access to financial services through the use of information technology.
  11. The Secretary of the Interior shall identify policies that will accelerate the use of unclassified geospatial information systems at the State, local, and tribal level.
  12. The Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall work with research universities and the private sector to apply advances in information technology to managing the consequences of natural and man-made disasters.
  13. The Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, the Director of the National Science Foundation, the Director of the National Park Service, and the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services shall work with the private sector and cultural and educational institutions across the country to create a Digital Library of Education to house this country's cultural and educational resources.
  14. The Attorney General shall work with Federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to use information technologies to make our Nation's communities safer.
  15. Items 1–14 of this memorandum and my July 1, 1997, and November 30, 1998, memoranda shall be conducted subject to the availability of appropriations, consistent with the agencies' priorities and my budget, and to the extent permitted by law.
  16. The Vice President shall continue his leadership in coordinating the United States Government's electronic commerce strategy. Further, I direct that the heads of agencies report to the Vice President and to me on their progress in meeting the terms of the memorandum, through the Electronic Commerce Working Group (ECWG) in its annual report. To the extent that substantial new policy issues emerge, the analysis and action on those policies will be coordinated in a manner consistent with the responsibilities of the ECWG, the National Economic Council, and the Domestic Policy Council, as appropriate.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON