

## APPENDIX F: EXCERPTS FROM *A NATION OF OPPORTUNITY*<sup>1</sup>

*A Nation of Opportunity: A Final Report of the United States Advisory Council on the National Information Infrastructure* recommends goals for the implementation of the National Information Infrastructure, and action to be taken to assure that the Information Superhighway enhances key areas of American life.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### I. THE COUNCIL'S VISION

The United States stands today in the midst of one of the great revolutions in recorded history: the Information Age. The Information Superhighway provides the infrastructure that enables enormous benefits in education, economic well-being, and quality of life.

The Council urges that the Nation adopt the following five fundamental goals.

First, let us find ways to make information technology work for us, the people of this country, by ensuring that these wondrous new resources advance American constitutional precepts, our diverse cultural values, and our sense of equity.

Second, let us ensure, too, that getting America online results in stronger communities, and a stronger sense of national community.

Third, let us extend to every person in every community the opportunity to participate in building the Information Superhighway. The Information Superhighway must be a tool that is available to all individuals -- people of all ages, those from a wide range of economic, social, and cultural backgrounds, and those with a wide range of functional abilities and limitations -- not just a select few. It must be affordable, easy to use, and accessible from even the most disadvantaged or remote neighborhood.

Fourth, let us ensure that we Americans take responsibility for the building of the Superhighway—private sector, government at all levels, and individuals.

And, fifth, let us maintain our world leadership in developing the services, products, and an open and competitive market that lead to deployment of the Information Superhighway. Research and development will be an essential component of its sustained evolution.

In charting a course to meet these goals for the Information Superhighway, the Advisory Council identified what it believes are four critical issues that must be addressed and must be addressed early:

- What are the key areas of American life and work that will be impacted?

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. National Advisory Committee on the National Information Infrastructure, *A Nation of Opportunity: Realizing the Promise of the Information Superhighway*, West Publishing, January 1996. The text of *A Nation of Opportunity* has been reformatted for inclusion in this publication, but the content is as posted at [www.benton.org/Library/KickStart/nation.home.html](http://www.benton.org/Library/KickStart/nation.home.html).

- What is the role of universal access in the digital age?
- What are the rules of the road regarding intellectual property, privacy, and security?
- Who are the key stakeholders, and what are their roles?

The following recommendations reflect the Council's major proposals for addressing those issues.

## II. RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. IMPACT ON KEY AREAS OF AMERICAN LIFE AND WORK

1. **Electronic Commerce.** The Federal Government, in conjunction with others, should take steps to identify and resolve, wherever possible, legal, regulatory, and policy issues that restrict the development of electronic commerce on the Information Superhighway.
2. **Education and Lifelong Learning.** Create targeted Federal, State, and local initiatives, in full cooperation with the private sector, to accelerate access to the Information Superhighway and to facilitate the effective integration of Information Superhighway technologies and resources into all lifelong learning environments. Such initiatives should encourage the development and wide availability of quality Information Superhighway learning resources and stimulate the development of a viable market for Information Superhighway-related educational products and services.
3. **Emergency Management and Public Safety.** The Federal Government should convene a broad-based committee composed of those entities involved in standard setting, those involved with the development of new technology, and relevant State, local, and Tribal agencies to meet the needs of the emergency management, public safety, and criminal justice communities. The Federal Government also should involve local governments in regional planning and review to ensure the best possible coordination of resources within a region and involve community-based organizations for more effective gathering and dissemination of public information.
4. **Health.** The Federal Government, in conjunction with Tribal, State, regional, and local governments, should take steps to resolve, wherever possible, conflicting legal or regulatory barriers to the delivery and reimbursement of health information and health care across State borders. Such efforts should be accompanied by government funding of evaluation of telemedicine applications in the areas of cost, access, and quality.

Since protection of health information is a primary concern to everyone, the Council's recommendations on privacy and security should apply to the area of health information and should ensure both that information can be protected, and that it is available in properly authorized treatment situations.

5. **Government Information and Services.** All levels of government should use information infrastructure technologies to provide basic pointers\* to government information and services, thus simplifying public access to relevant government information; improving delivery of government services and the management and use of government information; and enabling the private sector to develop and provide enhanced and expanded value-added information products and services. (\* The term "pointers" in this context refers to information sources that would enable individuals and organizations in both the public and private sectors to identify and access government

information and services. The pointers are not the sought-after information and services themselves. Rather, they provide direct pathways to the desired government information and services. Current examples include the Federal Register, the Government Information Locator Services, and legislative calendars.)

## B. ENSURING ACCESS FOR ALL

1. **Information Superhighway deployment.** Commercial and competitive forces should drive the development of the Information Superhighway. Regulatory disincentives to Information Superhighway development should be removed. All subsidies should be made explicit and applied in a competitively neutral manner.
2. **Universal access and service.** The definition of universal service should evolve to accommodate converging technologies. All individuals should have affordable, ubiquitous, convenient, and functional access to Information Superhighway services. All individuals should be able to be both consumers and producers of information. Design of its components should accommodate the needs of disabled individuals.
3. **Government's role.** Government should act when commercial and competitive forces are failing to achieve the goals of universal access and universal service. Government should lead by example in the use of the Information Superhighway for offering and using information and services.

## C. RULES OF THE ROAD

### 1. Intellectual Property

- All levels of government should promote ongoing public education about the meaning and importance of intellectual property, including copyright and the fair use doctrine.
- The Federal Government should strive to have other countries implement consistent, effective, and appropriate policies and protections for intellectual property in the digital environment.

### 2. Privacy

- The Federal Government should follow through on privacy policy issues with the initial task of reviewing existing laws and practices to implement the Council's privacy principles and the recommendations of the IITF Privacy Working Group.

### 3. Security

- The Federal Government should encourage private sector awareness of security issues, initiate a public-private security consultation process, and foster mechanisms to promote private accountability for proper use of security measures.
- The Federal Government should not inhibit the development and deployment of encryption by the private sector.

4. **Free Speech**

- The government should not be in the business of regulating content on the Information Superhighway. It should defer to the use of privately provided filtering, reviewing, and rating mechanisms and parental supervision as the best means of preventing access by minors to inappropriate materials.

D. KEY ROLES

1. **The Private Sector Must Be the Builder.** The private sector -- defined broadly to include an array of nongovernmental entities -- must have the primary responsibility for the continued design, deployment, and operation of the Information Superhighway.
2. **Communities Are Key to Access and Learning.** As demonstrated in the Council's companion volume, *KickStart Initiative: Connecting America's Communities to the Information Superhighway*, it is the access at local institutions, especially schools, libraries, and community centers, that will continue to facilitate the Superhighway at the neighborhood level and open new opportunities to young students, working people, and older persons alike.
3. **Government Has a Critical Role as Catalyst.** Although not the primary builders of the Information Superhighway, all levels of government have a significant role to play in ensuring its effective development and deployment.
4. **Individuals Must Take Charge.** To realize the benefits of the Information Superhighway, individuals must be its champions at the local level, learn about and seize its opportunities, and respect the rights of others.

PART 2: IMPACT ON KEY AREAS OF AMERICAN LIFE AND WORK<sup>2</sup>

Questions of enormous importance surround the deployment and implementation of the Information Superhighway, questions that the Council has sought to address and for which it provides a framework for answers. These questions include:

- Who will use it and for what purposes?
- How can policy at all levels of government ensure that important social and economic goals are achieved by the use of the Information Superhighway?

In Part 2, the Council reports on its work in the key areas of uses to which the Superhighway will be put. In addressing these issues, the Council identified five areas where it believes the Information Superhighway will have the most dramatic effect in terms of changing the way Americans live and work.

- Electronic Commerce;
- Education and Lifelong Learning;
- Emergency Management and Public Safety;

---

<sup>2</sup> *A Nation of Opportunity*, Part 1, *America on the Information Superhighway*, is omitted from this excerpt, but is available at [www.benton.org/Library/KickStart/nation.america.html](http://www.benton.org/Library/KickStart/nation.america.html). *A Nation of Opportunity*, Part 2, *Impact on Key Areas on American Life and Work*, includes five sections, but only the section on Government Information and Services is included in this excerpt. All of Part 2 is available at [www.benton.org/Library/KickStart/nation.impact.html](http://www.benton.org/Library/KickStart/nation.impact.html).

- Health; and
- Government Information and Services.

These are by no means the only areas that will be touched and changed by the Information Superhighway. The Council believes that information technologies are tools that can transform and enhance almost every facet of American life.

In Part 2, brief descriptions of each area are followed by the key Council messages relevant to each area, and then by Principles and Action Recommendations that the Council developed to guide policymakers.

## GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND SERVICES

Democracy requires public access to government information and services. The Information Superhighway provides the opportunity to enhance the public's participation in government by promoting an informed and knowledgeable populace through increased access to government facilities. Information infrastructure technologies will also transform the effectiveness and efficiency of government services and their delivery. This section presents the basic principles of government information and services, followed by action recommendations.

Democracy requires public access to government information and services. The Information Superhighway provides the opportunity to enhance the public's participation in government by promoting an informed and knowledgeable populace through increased access to government information. Information infrastructure technologies will also transform the effectiveness and efficiency of government services and their delivery.

The free flow of information between the government and the public enables the public to meet their civic responsibilities, protect their rights, and provide for their consent. Government information belongs to the people, is owned by them, and should be accessible to them. These principles have been fundamental tenets of this Nation since its inception.

The Information Superhighway will provide all levels of government—Federal, State, local, and Tribal—with the opportunity to contribute to information infrastructure development. It must be recognized that different levels of government operate within differing jurisdictions, however, each with its own requirements, assumptions, and practices. Different jurisdictions often have differing interpretations regarding creation, use, ownership, dissemination, disposition of, and charges for government information. Despite these differences, cooperation and partnering among all levels of government are essential to efficient management, use, and delivery of government information and services.

The Information Superhighway will fundamentally transform the public's interactions with their governments, providing new opportunities for enhanced accountability, access, and service. The Advisory Council recognizes that there are categories of government information that may be withheld to protect a legitimate public or private interest, and the principles below should be interpreted consistently with applicable law.

Information and information technologies have also begun to transform the way the American people receive government information and services and relate to their elected officials, offering an unprecedented opportunity to enhance participatory democracy in the United States. Some States have put public kiosks in places that offer "one-stop shopping" for government information

and services. These interactive, multilingual, touchscreen kiosks, located in places such as shopping malls, libraries, and supermarkets, are making it easier for the public to obtain important government information and handle routine tasks such as applying for government jobs, renewing automobile licenses, ordering birth certificates, and learning about job-training programs.

All levels of government have entered the Information Age, using information and information technologies to improve communication with constituents, enhance delivery of government information and services, and increase public safety. For example, the White House has developed its own "Homepage," a user-friendly menu of information available from the White House. Congress, too, has created an online service called "Thomas." Like the White House Homepage, Thomas is accessible through the Internet and provides legislative information such as the text of bills, the *Congressional Record*, and Congressional Research Service summaries of legislation. Some States use broadband systems to improve their criminal justice systems, enabling video arraignments, depositions, and first appearances. The system saves costs and protects the public by reducing the need to transport prisoners from one location to another. The current uses of technology as a means to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government are just the beginning. An enhanced Information Superhighway would prompt more widespread use of the types of services now available and prompt the development of new and better services. Development of the Information Superhighway to deliver these benefits should be based on the following Council principles.

### PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND SERVICES

1. Government information, including records of the actions of government, should be conveniently accessible to all persons, utilizing information infrastructure capabilities whenever feasible and appropriate.
2. Government services should be accessible to all persons eligible for such services, utilizing information infrastructure capabilities wherever feasible and appropriate.
3. The Federal Government should not charge for making its information available on the Information Superhighway nor charge for access to that information. Hard copy material, when available, should continue to be distributed under existing practices.
4. Government should encourage the widest possible cost-effective dissemination of government information in a wide diversity of formats and sources.
5. Government should encourage the private sector to take the lead in providing value-added information and services over information infrastructures.
6. Government entities must ensure and protect the quality, integrity, and security of government information and services over information infrastructures and provide appropriate preservation and archiving of government information to ensure continued usability and availability.
7. Government should safeguard the privacy of persons about whom information exists in government records, as well as persons who use or request government information.
8. Government employees, and ideally all individuals, should be educated and trained regarding their rights and responsibilities under existing information laws.

9. The public should be given an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to decisions affecting government information and services over information infrastructures.

#### ACTION RECOMMENDATION FOR GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND SERVICES

All levels of government should use information infrastructure technologies to provide basic pointers\* to government information and services, thus simplifying public access to relevant government information; improving delivery of government services and the management and use of government information; and enabling the private sector to develop and provide enhanced and expanded value-added information products and services. (\*The term "pointers" in this context refers to information sources that would enable individuals and organizations in both the public and private sectors to identify and access government information and services. The pointers are not the sought-after information and services themselves. Rather, they provide direct pathways to the desired government information and services. Current examples include the *Federal Register*, the Government Information Locator Services, and legislative calendars.)

#### DEFINITIONS

**Government information** means information, regardless of format, which is created, collected, processed, disseminated, or disposed of by or for a government entity, at either the Federal, State, local, or Tribal level, according to the applicable laws of the relevant jurisdiction.

**Government services** are services provided by government entities as required by legislative mandates, including, for example, provision of social services, public safety, and criminal justice.

**Government records** are documentary materials, regardless of format, made or received by a government entity under law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that entity or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of a government entity or because of the informational value of the data in them.

**Private sector** includes, for the purposes of these principles, for-profit, not-for-profit, and nonprofit entities.