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President Welcomes Plan to Strengthen U.S. Leadership in Information Technology, (August 10, 1998)

Media Advisory

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A report released today by the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee (PITAC), whose membership includes many of the nation's top computing and communications experts, sets out a bold agenda for ensuring America's leadership in the Information Age by expanding government investments in long-term research and development in technologies such as computers, networks, and software. Such investments drive economic growth, generate new knowledge, create new jobs, build new industries, ensure our national security, protect the environment, and improve the health and quality of life for our people.

In accepting this report, President Clinton thanked the Committee in a letter for their work in developing a research agenda for the Nation, and renewed his commitment to make significant increases in computing and communications research in the years ahead. "Our nation's economic future and the welfare of our citizens depend on continued advances and innovation in the information technologies which have produced so many remarkable developments in science, engineering, medicine, business, and education," the President said.

Vice President Gore, author of the High Performance Computing Act of 1991 and long-time supporter of the "information superhighway," also voiced his support for research in information technology. "Information technology can be a powerful tool for achieving many of our most important national objectives," the Vice President said, "such as creating jobs and growing our economy, providing our children with a world-class education, expanding access to high-quality health care in rural America, and strengthening our national security."

The PITAC report notes that the growth in today's information technology (IT) sector is leading the growth of all other sectors of the economy. The Federal Reserve reports that during the past five years production in computers, semiconductors, and communications equipment quadrupled at a time when total industrial production grew by 28 percent. These three industries account for one-third of the total growth in production since 1992. As we approach the 21st century, the opportunities for

innovation in IT are larger than they ever have been --and more important.

During his June 1998 commencement address at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the President asked Dr. Neal Lane, his new science advisor, to prepare a detailed plan on computing and communications research. He has directed Dr. Lane to work with our nation's scientific community and to carefully consider the new research directions identified in the Committee's report.

The Committee stressed the importance of Clinton Administration initiatives in computing and communications such as the Next Generation Internet, the Department of Energy's DOE 2000 distributed computing program, and the National Science Foundation's Knowledge and Distributed Intelligence emphasis. This year, President Clinton has proposed record increases for civilian research and development to keep America at the cutting-edge of science and technology.

Recognizing the critical role that Federal research has played in developing modern computing, the Internet, and other Information Age technologies, the Committee urged the President to ensure that this momentum is maintained. The Committee argued for sharply increased support for basic research, giving highest priority to research on computer software. They also stressed the importance of allowing the research community to "live in the future" and tackle long-term high-risk research challenges.

Specifically, the Committee recommend emphasis be placed on:

- Techniques for developing software that is more dependable and reliable;
- Communication systems which will be able to support billions of users and devices that are attached to the network;
- High-speed computers and software that can deliver useful performance that is a thousand times faster than today's most powerful supercomputers; and
- Research that ensures that America's workforce is properly prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the Information Age.

In responding to the President's direction, Dr. Lane said "I concur with the Committee's conclusion that research in computing and communications merits expanded support and is as important to America's position of leadership in the 21st Century as any area of research. We must rededicate ourselves to cutting-edge R&D in information technology, or other nations could pass us by, and that is a risk the United States cannot afford. Breathtaking advances in information technologies mean, however, that research priorities need to be redefined to take advantage of new opportunities. The PITAC report will provide Federal agencies with a compelling set of research goals which will provide valuable guidance as they prepare plans for our year 2000 budget."

A copy of the Committee's report is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.ccic.gov/>.