



September 1, 1999

To all Members of Congress, the President, and the Vice President:

On behalf of the Technology Network and the Computing Research Association, we are writing to express our profound concern about the adverse impact that pending appropriations bills would have on federal investment in long-term information technology research. We fear the current form of these bills would forgo critical opportunities to improve the lives of the American people through the enabling power of computing and information technologies.

We urge the President and the Congress to work together to fully fund agency budget requests stemming from the recommendations of the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee (PITAC), an independent, Congressionally chartered panel of distinguished leaders in information technology industry and research. The PITAC proposals are embodied in bipartisan authorizing legislation, the Networking and Information Technology Research and Development Act (H.R. 2086), authored by House Science Committee Chair James Sensenbrenner. They are also contained in the Administration's Information Technology for the Twenty-First Century initiative. The PITAC proposals are backed by a broad bipartisan coalition and deserve to be enacted regardless of how questions about the federal budget surplus are resolved. Indeed, the surplus will not materialize as expected without continued economic growth, and economic growth increasingly depends on the development and diffusion of information technologies.

The potential benefits of expanding federal support for fundamental IT research are tremendous. Advances in IT are transforming every aspect of our society, from communications, commerce, and national security to education, health care, and transportation. Yet many challenges remain that can only be addressed through sustained support for broad-based, precompetitive research. A strong federal role is critical, as we have seen in the past: many of the computing and digital communications technologies that underlie the Internet; systems for managing and accessing large datasets; computer graphics and visualization technologies; and computational and modeling methods that are driving progress in science have all been stimulated by federal support over the past 40 or so years.

The impact of these investments is demonstrated most dramatically by recent economic indicators: IT producers were responsible for more than one-third of real economic growth in 1995-98, despite accounting for only 8 percent of GDP. The "Internet economy" alone generated \$300 billion in revenues in 1998, already rivaling century-old sectors like energy and automobiles. These IT industries generate millions of new high-paying jobs, contribute to reducing inflation, and enable productivity increases throughout the economy.

But we cannot take our economic prosperity for granted—the flow of innovations is in danger of being curtailed if we fail to make the necessary investments. In response, several agencies are requesting funding increases for IT research in their FY 2000 budgets. These are modest investments in sound, focused programs based on the research objectives and priorities identified by the PITAC, including \$146 million for the National Science Foundation, \$70 million for Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, \$70 million for the Department of Energy, and \$38 million for NASA.

It is imperative that these budget requests be fulfilled. While we know there are many competing priorities, we believe that full funding of long-term, precompetitive information technology research is especially warranted given the pervasive and catalytic impact of advances in IT. We would appreciate your fervent efforts in this regard during the final weeks of the appropriations process. Thanks very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roberta R. Katz".

Roberta Katz
Chief Executive Officer
The Technology Network

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward Lazowska".

Edward Lazowska
Chair
Computing Research Association