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"Internet broadband Initiative"

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January 25, 2002

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I realize that fairly recently a lot of very important people have given you a great deal of information and encouragement with regards to pressing forward with some form of "Internet broadband initiative" in the United States. *I am certainly glad to hear it.*

Without a doubt they can present you with far more detailed and expert information than any simple end-user, such as myself, ever could. However, my circumstances are somewhat unique as they relate to broadband's potential for improving the lives of millions throughout this country. Therefore, the purpose of this letter is to provide you with a brief description of perhaps one of the key benefits that broadband will bring to so very many individuals who may find themselves in similar circumstances — information that I'm almost certain was not a part of the recent discussions you have had with telecommunications industry leaders.

I am one of the millions of disabled Americans. (My particular disabilities involve a combination of three separate neurological maladies which prevent the normal functioning of the arms and hands and cause a great deal of chronic pain throughout the upper thoracic region. I am completing this particular correspondence solely through the use of voice recognition technology.) I'm currently 33 years of age. I was originally diagnosed with these neurological problems approximately 14 years ago. When the first signs of these neurological problems began to manifest themselves I was in the middle of my freshman year of college. However, as a result of chronic pain and medications which sought to combat this chronic pain, I was forced to remove myself from active on-campus participation in my educational pursuits. There was simply no way that I could continue to maintain any form of normal in-class, on-campus scheduling as a result of my health condition deteriorating rapidly.

The next seven years of my life constituted a very real effort in frustration as far as attempting to continue one with my collegiate educational pursuits. If I was unable to maintain any normal schedules as a result of pain, there was simply no way that I was going to be able to press forward with any real success. Sure, I could take a correspondence course from time to time, but putting together an entire undergraduate degree through correspondence courses was impossible; furthermore, it would have taken nearly a decade, in my estimation.

Fortunately the answer came in 1995 when the University of Maryland, among a handful of other institutions in the United States, decided to embark upon what has now become their extremely successful online degree program initiative. Through this program I was

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able to maintain regular semester schedules without the rigid on-campus daily schedules. Within four years I had completed my undergraduate education at this excellent institution of higher learning, and I am pleased to say that I graduated with highest honors. I am now enrolled within a Masters degree program in political science at Virginia Tech, a program which similarly is available entirely online.

Mr. President, without such online initiatives in the area of education it is my belief that thousands of individuals across this nation would not have the means nor the ability to be able to continue to pursue their collegiate goals, whether as a result of a disability, occupational restraints, family obligations, etc. **Whatever the reason, online education offers a marvelous opportunity for adults to be able to finally realize their educational goals.**

However, there are still far too many institutions of higher learning who are unwilling to venture down this path as a result of the limited span of broadband, at least at present. In other words, broadband is difficult to get in many areas, as you are well aware. Broadband can be somewhat cost prohibitive. And there have been some broadband technical glitches that still need to be worked out as we observe this fabulous technology emerge out of its infancy.

{ But it is my sincere belief that unless the federal government takes a primary role in urging on such broadband development here in the United States — whatever role that may be — broadband will fail to make the necessary strides towards somewhat universal adaptation. }

Mr. President, you and Mrs. Bush have often stated that education is one of your primary focal points as you move throughout the tenure of your administration. **Please understand that broadband can have a most significant role within education — not just for elementary and secondary students, but also for adult students such as myself.**

Currently there are no Ph.D. programs available within the online format in the United States. There are only a handful of Masters degree programs available online (with the exception of M.B.A. programs; I believe that there are at least 15 online M.B.A. programs in the country). Similarly, there are very few undergraduate programs available entirely online. (Yes, it is true that some fields of education will never and should never be adapted towards the goal of online education. Easy examples are the biological and natural sciences, medicine, and so forth. But there are so very many fields that could be completely, or at least partially, adapted towards the online environment.)

The technologies are in place for a tremendous revolution in education. Hundreds of companies have incorporated distance learning on an everyday basis in order to further train their employees. It is an area of education that I believe will only continue to

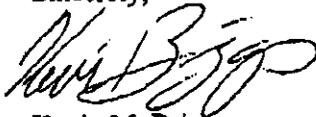
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*expand. Nevertheless, the pace of that expansion, as well as its overall success, depends largely upon the decisions you and other members of the federal government make at this time in regards to any so-called broadband initiative.*

I urge you to press forward with this most worthwhile endeavor. If I had not had access to broadband's online learning opportunities a few years ago I would still be without an undergraduate education, without the ability to enter graduate school, and without the ability to press forward with my life. It's just that simple.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



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