

## LARSON APPLAUDS PROGRESS SEEN IN NEW REPORT ON THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

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HARTFORD—U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) hailed the report released today on the state of the "digital divide" in the United States as "a clear sign that America is moving forward technologically." The report, released by the U.S. Department of Commerce, states that "The rapid uptake of new technologies is occurring among most groups of Americans, regardless of income, education, race or ethnicity, location, age, or gender, suggesting that digital inclusion is a realizable goal."

"This reversal in trends is due, in part, to the efforts of President Clinton, who first brought the issue of a technological divide between groups of Americans to the forefront," said Larson. "I applaud the President for his actions taken on the issue and for leading the way in allowing the United States to begin to close the gap before it grew impossibly wide. However, we must accept that there is still much more work to be done before we can completely overcome the divide between Americans. It is going to take a full and lasting partnership between the public and private sectors to ensure that no American is left behind in the future because they simply didn't have the access to, or knowledge of, the vast technology that has developed in America."

The data contained in the report shows that the digital divide is narrowing in America:

- The share of households with Internet access soared by 58%, rising from 26.2% in December 1998 to 41.5% in August 2000.
- The gap between households in rural areas and households nationwide that access the Internet has narrowed from 4.0 percentage points in 1998 to 2.6 percentage points in 2000. Rural households are much closer to the nationwide Internet penetration rate of 41.5%. In rural areas this year, 38.9% of the households had Internet access, a 75% increase from 22.2% in December 1998.
- Americans at every income level are connecting at far higher rates from their homes, particularly at the middle income levels. Internet access among households earning \$35,000 to \$49,000 rose from 29.0% in December 1998 to 46.1% in August 2000. Today, more than two-thirds of all households earning more than \$50,000 have Internet connections (60.9% for households earning \$50,000 to \$74,999 and 77.7% for households earning above \$75,000).
- Access to the Internet is also expanding across every education level, particularly for those with some high school or college education. Households headed by someone with "some college experience" showed the greatest expansion in Internet penetration of all education levels, rising from 30.2% in December 1998 to 49.0% in August 2000.
- Blacks and Hispanics, while they still lag behind other groups, have shown impressive gains in Internet access. Black households are now more than twice as likely to have home access than they were 20 months ago, rising from 11.2% to 23.5%. Hispanic households have also experienced a tremendous growth rate during this period, rising from 12.6% to 23.6%.
- The disparity in Internet usage between men and women has largely disappeared. In December 1998, 34.2% of men and 31.4% of women were using the Internet. By August 2000, 44.6% of men and a statistically indistinguishable 44.2% of women were Internet users.

On Wednesday, Oct. 11, Congressman Larson organized a meeting for Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald (D-CA), Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA), Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D-TX), Rep. Harold Ford (D-TN), Rep. Max Sandlin (D-TX), and Rep. Eddie Bernice-Johnson (D-TX) at The White House with Gene Sperling, Assistant to the President for Economic Policy and Director of the National Economic Council, about further legislative response to the divide. The purpose of the meeting with the President's Economic Advisor was also to coordinate strategy for supporting the President's education technology proposals as the endgame in budget negotiations approaches. The meeting also dealt with the legislative agenda proposed by the members at a Capitol Hill press conference on Oct. 3rd for closing the nation's technology gap.

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