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Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 19, 2000

JOSH
ASAP

The Honorable William J. Clinton
President of United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you prepare for the final budget end game with Republican Leadership, we wanted to provide you with the combined work of members of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the New Democrats, Blue Dogs, and Progressives. We understand implicitly that while the Cold War is over, and we are no longer in an *arms* race, we are in a *skills* race!

On April 4, 2000, you kicked off a "national call to action" to close the digital divide, beginning with your third New Markets Tour, whose purpose it was to "chart a new expedition, to open new frontiers of possibilities for America--the digital frontiers." In light of your extraordinary efforts, we are writing to inform you of an omnibus initiative that we are proposing to ensure that America is prepared for the challenges that these digital frontiers of the 21st century present.

There are alarming signals that point towards a systemic problem threatening the future leadership of this nation and its ability to compete as a world economic and military leader. The growing digital divide between the information "haves" and the "have nots", the number of unfilled high-tech jobs in this country, as well as problems in military recruiting and retention are both outcomes of the high tech economy that is moving this nation and world forward.

According to the Department of Commerce's "*Falling Through the Net*", a digital divide exists between those who have access to information and those who do not. This divide separates us by race, income, gender, and geography. Education Secretary Richard Riley acknowledges that two million new teachers will be needed within the next ten years to meet the educational needs of our schools.

Members of the C.B.C., C.H.C., N.D.C., Blue Dogs, and Progressives have forged an omnibus proposal we call SEEDS. SEEDS is a series of legislative proposals that call for the planning and development of a strategic, education, economic and defense system.

America needs to meet the demands of a digitally enhanced, global economy with adequate infrastructure in our schools, technologically fluent teachers, a cooperative private sector, and a decisive government. You and the Vice-President have made

enormous strides in this area, against the Republican tide, and we believe this is a potential problem of crisis-proportion if we do not act on your proposals and ours. We want to join with you in your final push to leave no one behind in this economy.

To those ends, we will be introducing legislation that will address the digital divide, educational opportunities for all children, and the skills gap that allows hundreds of thousands of high-tech jobs to be left unfilled and further hamper recruitment in our military. We have enclosed a copy of the legislation and a summary for your review.

We believe the biggest threat to the American economy and our national security is a technologically inadequate populace. The nation's defense, its continued economic prosperity depend on public education, and the ensuing pipeline it can provide of highly skilled, highly trained individuals who are prepared to compete.

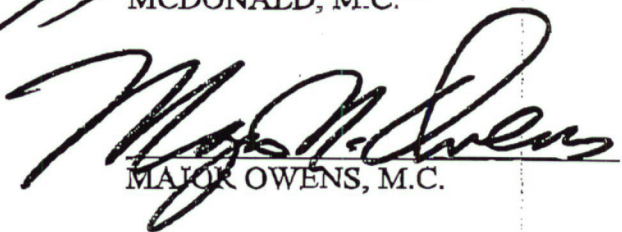
We would like to meet with you and your staff, to make your "national call to action" our priority as well as yours as you negotiate the final budget. We look forward in the closing days of the session to work with you on bridging the digital divide. You are our best hope...and America's best hope in these negotiations.

Sincerely,


EDWARD J. MARKEY, M.C.


JUANITA MILLENDER-
MCDONALD, M.C.


SILVESTRE REYES, M.C.


MAJOR OWENS, M.C.


MAX A. SANDLIN, M.C.


RUBÉN E. HINOJOSA, M.C.


CALVIN DOOLEY, M.C.

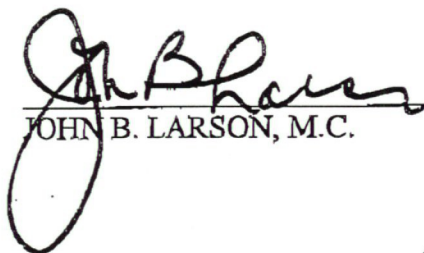

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