

Technology, Economic Growth & Open Government

Priorities for 2009

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The Obama Administration and 111th Congress face tremendous challenges and great opportunities. Among the most important challenges are spurring an economic recovery in the short term, while also building the foundations for long term growth and job creation. We have a unique opportunity to use the Internet and other technological innovations to advance economic growth, job creation, and consumer choice. At a time when public trust in Washington has fallen to new lows, technology also offers new ways to make our government more open and responsive to the citizens it serves.

21st Century Infrastructure

The immense promise of the Internet remains unfulfilled for tens of millions of Americans who do not have high-speed broadband Internet connections. Increasing broadband access to the Internet today is just as vital as building the Interstate Highway System was half a century ago. New cost-effective systems, such as cloud computing, are making consumers and businesses more productive online. And protecting the open Internet will help small businesses thrive, create new jobs, and give consumers greater choice.

Create more broadband Internet competition.

The federal government should take pro-competitive actions such as allocating radio spectrum more efficiently, offering incentives to free up underutilized spectral resources for commercial uses, and continuing to expand unlicensed spectrum for mobile broadband.

Increase broadband penetration.

Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) should develop a universal broadband strategy including targeted subsidies for increased competition and deployment and accountability measures to support broadband access, particularly in under-served and high-cost areas that lack real competition.

Protect an open Internet.

To help ensure that the Internet remains an open platform for users and entrepreneurs, consumers should have access to the applications, content, and devices of their choosing without discrimination. Wireless users should also have the ability to use any device they choose on wireless networks and download any application they want.

Smart Energy

Economic recovery and growth can be stimulated and sustained by upgrading the country's energy infrastructure. Promoting energy efficiency and providing incentives for renewable energy technology, plug-in electric vehicles and smart electric grids will enhance energy security, address climate change and create 'green' jobs.

Reduce demand through efficiency.

Adopt technologies and practices that promote energy efficiency for buildings, equipment, appliances and vehicles in order to allow consumers and businesses to do more with less.

Develop renewable energy.

Increase support for research, development and deployment of clean energy technologies (i.e. wind, solar and enhanced geothermal) through incentives such as long-term tax support and national renewable energy standards. These investments will help create hundreds of thousands of green jobs over the next ten years.

Deploy smart electric grids.

Accelerate the deployment of new transmission lines, smart grids and smart power meters to provide for real-time information about consumers' energy use, enable the two-way flow of electricity, and integrate solar and wind energy on a large scale.

Electrify transportation.

Put millions of plug-in electric vehicles on the road and fuel them with green electricity provided over a smart grid that intelligently manages charging and billing.

Innovation

Clearing a pathway for creativity is essential to spur innovation, free expression and economic growth. Obstacles to technological advancement must be removed in order for the United States to remain the preeminent technology power.

Protecting the balance in copyright law.

The balance in intellectual property laws must continue to enable Internet users to access and use information while respecting the rights of creators. U.S. policy at home and abroad should foster fair use, protect safe harbors for neutral technologies and services, rescue orphan works and facilitate efficient licensing structures.

Enact patent reform legislation.

For the patent system to continue as an engine for economic growth and innovation, Congress must reduce frivolous lawsuits, improve patent quality, encourage greater public participation in the review process, and ensure fair damage calculations.

Invest in research & development.

The R&D tax credit has been temporarily extended 11 times since 1981, but has not yet been made permanent. Removing this uncertainty will spur R&D investments by companies over the long term. In addition, funding should be increased for the National Science Foundation and other critical agencies.

Education & Workforce

Technological innovation is the key to creating high-wage jobs and bolstering U.S. global competitiveness. Federal and state policy makers must take action to give American students the tools and technologies they need to be successful in the 21st Century economy – and remove barriers that could keep the high tech economy from growing.

Improve math and science education.

The federal government should invest in raising science and math proficiency, increasing access to technology, improving curricula and sustaining investment in technology literacy programs.

Recruit highly-skilled teachers.

The federal government should take steps to increase the number of science and engineering graduate students in American universities and encourage math and science undergraduates to pursue graduate studies and teaching opportunities in their respective fields.

Increase H-1B visas.

Congress should increase the annual cap of H-1B visas to reflect the growth rate of our technology-driven economy and address the backlog of green card applications. Research shows that each employed H-1B visa holder helps create an additional five jobs.

Open & Accountable Government

The 2008 elections demonstrated how technology can increase political participation; now the power of Web 2.0 should be applied to government. The new Administration and Congress must work together to make it easier for citizens to find and interpret government information and make public officials more responsive to those they represent.

Make government information accessible.

Significant portions of more than 1,000 U.S. government agency websites still cannot be searched despite laws – including the E-Government Act of 2002 and the “Google for Government” Act of 2006 – mandating transparency. Policy makers should require government agencies to move aggressively to implement these laws and make public sector information timely, easy-to-find, and searchable.

Make government information useful.

Giving citizens access to information is important, but means little if they cannot interpret it. Providing raw data often doesn't help citizens understand the challenges we face or why key decisions were made. Once government agencies have met their duty to make information accessible, they must then build the online tools necessary to make the information useful.

Increase citizen participation.

Citizen participation must be built into Congressional and Executive branch decision-making in order to make the government more transparent, accountable, and relevant. Technology provides numerous low-cost, simple solutions for citizen participation and feedback, and the government should adopt them.

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