

is a cornerstone of good economic policy. It's a cornerstone of sound educational policy. And it's one of the reasons why I'm optimistic that America will lead—continue to lead the world when it comes to innovation and change. And that will be good for our people. That will be good for the revitalization of what I call the American spirit and the American dream.

I want to thank you for what you do. I appreciate your compassion. I appreciate your interest in the future of our country. May God continue to bless your work, and

may God continue to bless our country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:29 a.m. at the Minneapolis Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jesus “Jess” Carreon, chair of the board, and George R. Boggs, president and chief executive officer, American Association of Community Colleges; Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Memorandum on Improving Rights-of-Way Management Across Federal Lands To Spur Greater Broadband Deployment

April 26, 2004

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Improving Rights-of-Way Management Across Federal Lands to Spur Greater Broadband Deployment

Broadband, also known as high-speed Internet access, has the potential to bring new services and products to American consumers and businesses, fostering innovation, investment, and job-producing economic growth. My Administration has long recognized the economic vitality that can result from broadband deployment and is working to create an environment to foster broadband deployment. All Americans should have affordable access to broadband technology by the year 2007.

A key to widespread broadband deployment is ensuring that broadband providers have timely and cost-effective access to rights-of-way so that they can build out their networks across the Nation. These networks often need to cross large areas of land owned or controlled by the Federal Government. Thus, effective and efficient Federal rights-of-way policies and practices

are critical for promoting broadband deployment.

To ensure that the Federal Government's rights-of-way policies and practices facilitate the aggressive deployment of broadband networks, my Administration created a Federal Rights-of-Way Working Group composed of representatives from most of the major Federal agencies with land management responsibilities. The mission of the Working Group was to identify and recommend changes in Federal policies, procedures, regulations, and practices that would improve the process of granting rights-of-way for broadband communications networks on lands under Federal jurisdiction.

Based on information gathered from the communications industry, the Federal agencies, state, local, and tribal representatives, and other stakeholders, the Working Group has produced a report entitled, “Improving Rights-of-Way Management Across Federal Lands: A Roadmap for Greater Broadband Deployment,” which sets forth specific recommendations in four main areas.

- (1) Information Access and Collection—to streamline and standardize applications to reduce the administrative burden and costs on broadband providers.
- (2) Timely Process—to speed Federal agencies' consideration of rights-of-way applications.
- (3) Fees—to ensure that fees charged by Federal agencies are reasonable and appropriate.
- (4) Compliance—to ensure that Federal agencies have the proper tools to promote compliance with rights-of-way grants or permits.

These recommendations are designed to assist Federal agencies in efficiently and effectively performing their vital role as stewards of the public lands, while working co-

operatively with industry to spur broadband deployment.

Therefore, I hereby direct the heads of executive departments and agencies (agencies) to take appropriate actions to implement the specific recommendations contained in the report to the maximum extent practicable and as permitted by law.

In addition, agencies should review their existing policies and procedures and identify any additional ways to improve the process for granting rights-of-way for broadband communications networks. Agencies should report to me, through the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, within 1 year of the date of this memorandum on all actions taken. The agencies shall take these actions using existing budget authority.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Remarks in a Discussion on the Benefits of Health Care Information Technology in Baltimore, Maryland April 27, 2004

The President. Thanks a lot. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thanks for the hospitality. I'm really pleased to be here in the great city of Baltimore. Governor, I'm proud you're here. Thanks for greeting us at the airport—I mean, at the heliport. Thanks for bringing the first lady. Thanks for bringing the Lieutenant Governor as well. I'm proud you all are here.

I'm also proud to be with—in the presence of a man I still call Governor, Governor Schaefer. I'm proud you're here, Governor. He said he didn't care a whit about seeing me. He just wanted to make sure I gave his best to Mother. [*Laughter*] Still a plain-spoken fellow, aren't you?

But Governor, thanks, you're doing a great job for the State of Maryland, and congratulations on the newest Ehrlich.

Dutch Ruppensberger is with us today. Congressman, where are you? Oh, thanks for coming. Listen, I'm—here's the thing about the Congressman: He cares deeply about the people who wear the Nation's uniform. He's very much involved with programs to kind of lighten the load for our troops who are sacrificing and are working for a free world. Dutch, I'm proud of the job you've done. I know you've recently received the USO Merit Award. Well deserved, and congratulations. Thank you for doing that.

I want to thank George Owings and Larry Kimble, who are veterans affairs folks here for the State of Maryland. One is incoming. One is outgoing. Both care deeply about the veterans of this State. I appreciate so very much Nelson Sabatini, who is department of health and human services