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Remarks Announcing Steps To Make the Internet Family-Friendly

July 16, 1997

Thank you very much, Lois Jean, and thank you, Steve Case. Thank you, Mr. Vice President, for all the work you've done on this issue. And to Secretary Daley, Commissioner Varney, Deputy Attorney General Waxman, and the Members of Congress who had to go for a vote, I thank all of you for your interest. And thank you, all of you, who come here from the various companies, who were part of the Vice President's meeting this morning, and from other interested groups.

I think it's fair to say that history will evaluate the Internet as having sparked a revolution in information perhaps every bit as profound as the printing press. For today, at the click of a mouse, children can tap into the resources of the Library of Congress, to a great museum, communicate with classrooms around the world. I am particularly proud to point out that the Internet allows us now to join beyond the Earth. Just since July 4, NASA's *Mars Pathfinder* Web site has received more than 27 million visits. And we are very proud of that and proud of NASA.

But we all know and we've heard the horror stories about the inappropriate material for children that can be found on the Internet. We know children can be victimized over the Internet. After the Supreme Court struck down the portion of the Communications Decency Act last month affecting this as an abridgement of free speech, we brought together industry leaders and groups representing teachers, parents, librarians to discuss where to go next.

This morning there was a discussion that I believe can fairly be said to have reached a consensus about how to pave the way to a family-friendly Internet without paving over the constitutional guarantees of free speech and free expression. The plan has three components: new technologies, enforcement of existing laws, more active participation of parents.

As you have heard already, with regard to technology, the computer industry is developing a whole toolbox full of technologies that can do for the Internet what the V-chip will do for television. Some of the tools are already widely in use, as Steve said. They give parents the power to unlock and to lock the digital doors to objectionable content. Now we have to make these tools more readily available to all parents and all teachers in America. And as new tools come online, we have to distribute them quickly, and we have to make sure that parents are trained to use them.

In an extremely adroit use of language in our meeting earlier, one of the leaders said, "Well, Mr. President, you've talked about how technologically inept you are; perhaps you would be our guinea pig as each new thing comes along, and then we could certainly certify that, if you can figure out how to use it, anybody can." [*Laughter*] And so I sort of volunteered. Having been damned with faint praise, I enjoyed that. [*Laughter*] But I think it is important—it is important to know not only that things exist but that they are being used and that they can be used. So we had a little laugh about what is a very serious element of this whole endeavor.

Today several industry leaders are taking major steps in this direction. I'm pleased to announce first that Netscape Communications has committed to add family-friendly controls to the next release of its popular Internet browser. Parents who use the Netscape browser to explore the Internet will be able to tell the browser precisely what types of materials they do not wish their children to see. Microsoft, which also offers a popular Internet browser, has already incorporated this technology. Therefore, with Netscape's pledge today, we now have assurance that 90 percent of all software used to explore the Internet will have family-friendly controls built right in. It's also important to note that all of the major companies that offer Internet service now provide some form of family-friendly controls. And I commend all of them for that.

For these controls to work to their full potential, we also need to encourage every Internet site, whether or not it has material harmful for young people, to label its own content, as the Vice President described just a few moments ago. To help to speed the labeling process along, several Internet search engines—the Yellow Pages of

cyberspace, if you will—will begin to ask that all Web sites label content when applying for a spot in their directories. I want to thank Yahoo!, Excite, and Lycos for this important commitment. You're helping greatly to assure that self-labeling will become the standard practice. And that must be our objective.

Beyond technology, we must have strict enforcement of existing laws, the antistalking, child pornography, and obscenity laws as they apply to cyberspace. In the past 3 months alone, the FBI has expanded by 50 percent the staff committed to investigating computer-related exploitation of minors and established a task force to target computer child pornography and solicitation. In the past 6 months, the Department of Justice has increased the number of lawyers working in its Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section by 50 percent. We simply must not allow pornographers and pedophiles to exploit a wonderful medium to abuse our children.

And finally, we must recognize that in the end, the responsibility for our children's safety will rest largely with their parents. Cutting-edge technology and criminal prosecutions cannot substitute for responsible mothers and fathers. Parents must make the commitment to sit down with their children and learn together about the benefits and challenges of the Internet. And parents, now that the tools are available, will have to take upon themselves the responsibility of figuring out how to use them. I think it's fair to say that all parents will likely lag behind their children in facility on the Internet, but at least if we understand the tools that are available, it will be possible to do the responsible and correct thing.

Thanks to the talents, to the creativity, to the commitments of so many of you assembled today, we have now, therefore, a roadmap toward constructive steps for a family-friendly Internet. There is still a lot to do. Parent groups and educators must work to help hone our labeling systems so that they will actually screen out materials we don't want our children to see and, as others have said today, with equal energy help to highlight the materials that serve our children best. That is very, very important.

The Internet community must work to make these labels as common as food safety labels are today, to continue to expand access to family-friendly tools, including software to protect children's privacy from unscrupulous vendors. With a combination of technology, law enforcement, and parental responsibilities, we have the best chance to ensure that the Internet will be both safe for our children and the greatest educational resource we have ever known. And that is our common commitment, and for that, I thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:45 p.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Lois Jean-White, president, National Parent Teacher Association, and Steve Case, president, America Online.

Statement on Action on Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

July 16, 1997

Today I am notifying the Congress of my decision to suspend for 6 more months the right of U.S. citizens to file suit against foreign firms trafficking in confiscated properties in Cuba. This decision is consistent with my strong commitment to implement the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (LIBERTAD Act) in a way that best serves our national interest and hastens a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba.

I have invoked this waiver for the past year in order to continue strengthening cooperation with our friends and allies toward our shared goal of ending Cuba's 38 years of oppression. Thanks to the efforts of Stuart Eizenstat—my Special Representative for the Promotion of Democracy in Cuba and now Under Secretary of State—we have made significant progress. We are forging an international consensus on concrete steps to clear the way for a new era of democracy and prosperity for the people of Cuba.

I said in January that I expected to continue suspending this provision of title III of the LIBERTAD Act so long as our partners continued their stepped-up efforts to promote a democratic transition in Cuba. My decision today to renew the suspension reflects the sustained progress that has been made over the past 6 months and my expec-