PITAC Letter to Congress   (September 1, 1999)   Letter from the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee (PITAC) expressing concern over pending budget cuts in IT R&D and urging the Congress to ensure full funding for proposed increases in information technology R&D.

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The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
SH-522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0201

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As members of the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee, we would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the critical need for federal funding of information technology research and development. We have closely watched the appropriations actions and are deeply disappointed that the funding levels are well below those recommended in our report, President Clinton's Information Technology for the 21st Century initiative, and Congressman Sensenbrenner's bill, the Networking and Information Technology Research and Development Act.

The opportunities for innovation in information technology are greater than they have ever been. It is in our national interest to ensure a continued flow of new ideas and trained professionals in information technology. Unless immediate steps are taken to reinvigorate federal research in this critical area, we believe there will be significant reduction in the rate of economic progress over the coming decades. A loss of international leadership in information technology would be devastating to our economy and national security - and would hinder our ability to solve some of the most critical problems facing the nation.

Information technology will surely be one of the key engines of economic growth for our nation in the 21st century. Our present

capabilities and our position of world leadership were enabled by federal funding and vigorous information technology research and development. This funding allowed for technical advances that led to today's information tools, such as electronic computers and the Internet. Industry cannot fund basic, long-term research because of domestic and global competition and the need to rapidly bring products to market. However, with adequate federal funding, industry will seize opportunities to help keep our nation economically strong and viable.

In our recent report to the President, we recommended a focus on long-term, high-risk research and an increase in federal funding for information technology, particularly in research on software, scalable information infrastructure, high end computing and socioeconomic issues. The report recommends yearly funding increases to the federal information technology research and development programs beginning in FY2000 with the goal of increasing the annual information technology research and development budget by $1.37B by FY2004 - from $1.4B in FY1999 to $2.7B in FY2004.

As our report notes, federal funding for information technology research and development is critically inadequate. The economic and strategic importance of information technology and the unique role of the federal government in sponsoring information technology research require substantial and immediate funding for information technology in all agencies covered by the original High Performance Computing Act.

We hope that you will consider information technology a priority for federal investment in your budget deliberations.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and other members of Congress and the Administration to ensure adequate funds and sound policies and programs for information technology. If we can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Sincerely,

Raj Reddy   Irving Wladawsky-Berger
Co-Chair   Co-Chair
President's Information Technology Advisory
Committee