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## **February 9, 2007 - MARKEY ADDRESSES E-RATE AND OTHER TOP TECHNOLOGY ISSUES FOR NEW CONGRESS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-MA), the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet, received the Alliance for Public Technology's Susan G. Hadden Award at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. today.

His remarks prepared for delivery are below

[I want to thank my friend Charles Benton for his kind words. I also want to thank Sylvia Rosenthal and Barbara O'Connor from the Alliance for Public Technology. Karen Peltz Strauss has literally written the book on the battle to bring the fruits of advanced technology to people with disabilities. She has been a tireless advocate and an indispensable ally to me over the years.]

It is often noted that we live in the digital era, in an age when information traverses the globe literally at light speed. We also live at a time when our national media environment has gone from encompassing not only the traditional media and the new media, but to a point today when we talk about the so-called "participatory media," where the people publish and blog and communicate themselves. In my view, in such an environment it is even more vital that every American have affordable access to the richness that telecommunications technologies can deliver.

This affordable access for all Americans is vital not only because it is right and fair.

It is vital for all of us. That's because in the economy of the 21st Century, we need all of our citizens to be productive. In the decades ahead, America needs to compete in a fiercely competitive economy with all of the diversity and productivity and innovation that all our people can muster to the task. Preparing the next generation for this future was what my original E-rate provision was all about.

When I was Chairman of the Subcommittee in 1993, I had lunch one day with producer George Lucas of Star Wars fame. At lunch we discussed how telecommunications technology could assist education and how kids in a 21st Century America would need a high tech classroom experience that animated the course curricula in a way that enhanced learning. We talked in particular about getting the cable and phone companies to do this for free as a demonstration of their commitment to the future of the communities they served.

I called the education rate program the "E-rate." In June of 1994 that bill passed the House by a vote of 423-4. While the telecomm bill that year died in the Senate and Democrats then lost control of the Congress, fortunately in the next Congress the E-rate was successfully added to the Senate version of the Telecomm Act by Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME), and Democratic Senators Rockefeller, Dorgan, Exon, and Bob Kerrey. And today that program provides \$2.25 Billion worth of telecommunications services and Internet access to K-12 schools and libraries across the country annually.

If we don't prepare all of our citizens for the future we will suffer the consequences socially and economically. By the year 2025, census projections indicate that the majority of Americans will be members of minority groups. In addition, we have tens of millions of citizens who are deaf, or hard of hearing, sight impaired, blind, who may not be able to walk, or who are otherwise homebound or isolated. Moreover, as our population ages, we will inevitably have more citizens who may be hard of hearing, disabled, or homebound.

I have long believed that telecommunications technologies can empower and ennoble the lives of our citizens and I am eager to explore how we can make more progress and battle to achieve it. Author Thomas Friedman famously has said the "world is flat" but it is simply not flat for those who cannot access or utilize the

telecommunications tools that help them reach this world.

I want to thank those of you in this room who have worked in the trenches over the years and who have assisted me in legislative efforts to put many laws on the books for people with disabilities. From the Television Decoder Circuitry Act in 1990, which I passed to mandate closed captioning so that the deaf and hearing-impaired people could have equal access to the television medium, to the most recent battle to ensure that the FCC doesn't gut the intent of the captioning provision which I spearheaded as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 by handing out hundreds of waivers.

Finally, there is an array of exciting and innovative new technologies that are Internet-based. These technologies present new problems for access for people with disabilities, but also new opportunities and promise. Internet telephone services, or VOIP technologies, to choose one example, have increasingly become a marketplace substitute for traditional wire line phone service. While the FCC has looked at extending universal service obligations, emergency 911 rules, law enforcement access to such technologies, we do not yet have similar progress for people with disabilities. I think it is time to move on this agenda and we need to work collaboratively with companies to ascertain what progress can be made sooner rather than later.

I will be working closely this year with Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee John Dingell (D-MI), along with Ranking Member of the Full Committee Joe Barton (R-TX), and Ranking Member of the Telecommunications and Internet Subcommittee Fred Upton (R-MI). I am confident they share the goals of ensuring access to telecommunications technologies for all Americans. As Chairman of the Telecommunications and Internet Subcommittee I intend to explore how we can make progress, on a bipartisan, consensus basis, to achieve these goals.

Thank you, again, to the Alliance for Public Technology for this award. I am truly honored to receive it.

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**CONTACT: Israel Klein**  
**202.225.2836**