



**BENTON**  
FOUNDATION

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Charles Benton  
Chairman and CEO

Michael Smith  
Treasurer

Henry Rivera  
General Counsel

Elizabeth Daley  
Adrienne B. Furniss  
Terry Goddard  
Lee Lynch  
Woodward A. Wickham

**Trustees**

Charles Benton  
Adrienne B. Furniss  
Leonard Schrage

January 2, 2007

President George Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

In 2004, you set an ambitious and critical national goal of achieving universal, affordable broadband access by 2007.

As you know, universal broadband availability would not only unleash an estimated \$500 billion in economic growth and more than 1.2 million high-wage jobs, but it could help bridge the digital divide and unleash a new wave of innovations, transforming almost every aspect of our lives.

But, as 2007 begins, we appear to be far from achieving your broadband goal.

- The United States has now fallen to 15th among industrialized nations in deploying broadband services.
- Only 25 percent of U.S. adults in rural areas have broadband services in their homes, reflecting too few choices, unaffordable prices, and limited (or lack of) service availability.
- The broadband penetration rate in rural areas is almost half the rate in urban and suburban households. Though growing, rural Internet penetration has remained roughly 10 percentage points behind the national average
- In addition, less than 10 percent of households with incomes below \$25,000 have a broadband connection.

The administration has taken some important steps forward; however, it is unfortunately only too clear that too many Americans are being left behind without broadband choices and the chance to participate in the information age economy. To achieve your goal, we need broadband pipes that are bigger, go faster, and extend further into every corner, community, and city in America – and we need them right away.

In this next year, policymakers must answer the central question of how we become a digital nation and extend the benefits of broadband and the opportunities it delivers to all Americans. Broadband and the applications it enables will unquestionably qualify as the dominant communications medium of the 21st century. Without a strong, comprehensive policy commitment to developing our broadband technologies and applications, we

1625 K Street, NW  
11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 639-5770

1560 Sherman Avenue  
Suite 440  
Evanston, IL 60201  
(847) 328-3040

cannot hope to correct the problems that have plunged us down the ranks of global competitiveness. We need policies that give the “green light” to investment in communications infrastructure in rural and low-income America with a strong commitment to competition, accountability, efficiency, and oversight.

Our nation’s commitment to ubiquitous and affordable communications has never been more important. Standing at the threshold of an information technology revolution, we cannot and should not abandon or weaken our guarantee of universal, affordable communication access for all Americans. Instead we must unleash the rivers of data and opportunity that broadband can enable, and extend prosperity to a new generation of Americans.

Therefore, to restore the country’s Internet competitiveness and meet your universal broadband goal, I urge you to:

- 1) create a national broadband strategy with set benchmarks, deployment timetables, a commitment to demand drivers, and measurable thresholds;
- 2) with analog phone penetration nearly universal, develop federal policies to transition us to fully digital communication technologies – making broadband based communication as universal as telephones are today; and
- 3) protect our traditional values in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – providing opportunities for all, including people with disabilities, to participate in the digital economy, using information age tools to ensure public safety, and respecting the privacy of all Americans.

There are no easy solutions to the challenges of extending broadband’s reach to every American. But these challenges must be addressed based on the same principles that have always guided progressive communications policy — a commitment to ubiquitous, affordable access to the most important technologies of the era.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Benton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles Benton  
Chairman and CEO