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New Report Shows How E-Rate is Connecting Communities and Schools to 21st Century Academic and Employment Opportunities

WASHINGTON, DC (February 28, 2007) – From coast-to-coast, from economically challenged inner cities to remote rural areas, students, parents, educators, business leaders and communities have benefited from the E-Rate, a ground-breaking telecommunications program created in 1997 that provides deep discounts on telecommunications, Internet access and internal networking to America’s public and private schools as well as public libraries. A new report, *“E-Rate: 10 Years of Connecting Kids and Community,”* released today by two education coalitions – the Education and Libraries Networks Coalition (EdLiNC) and the National Coalition for Technology in Education and Training (NCTET) – states that the E-Rate has transformed America’s schools and libraries into modern institutions but that its mission is not yet complete.

Released today during a Capitol Hill briefing, the new report indicates that E-Rate supported connectivity allows 100% of public libraries to provide free Internet access to their communities. The report also credits the E-Rate for increasing the overall number of public classrooms with Internet access from 14% in 1996 to 95% in 2005. After 10 years of E-Rate support, more than 90% of classrooms in rural, high-minority and low-income school districts now have Internet connections, allowing them to leverage modern communication tools to support student achievement. An additional 2,800 private schools have also received support from the E-Rate to support educational goals.

“As this report clearly shows, just a decade after E-Rate first began, more people than ever before are reaping the benefits of the information age. E-Rate has made technology and the Internet accessible for our students, our teachers, and people of all ages through our local libraries,” said Senator John D. (Jay) Rockefeller IV (D-WV). “Thanks to E-Rate, we are quickly advancing toward a world where the digital divide will no longer exist.”

The E-Rate was enacted as an amendment to the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and represents an expansion of the universal service fund (USF), including Internet access support for schools and libraries for the first time in the USF. The authors of the provision – Senators Jay Rockefeller, Olympia Snowe (R-ME), James Exon (D-NE) and Bob Kerrey (D-NE) – and Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA) understood the importance of providing schools and libraries, particularly those in rural and low-income urban areas, with access to new telecommunications technology and the Internet’s vast resources. In 1997, the Federal Communications Commission unanimously approved the rules to implement the E-Rate and established a \$2.25 billion annual cap for E-Rate discounts. Since its inception, the E-Rate has provided nearly \$19 billion in discounted services.

“Information is the key to education and to keeping America competitive in an increasingly global economy. The E-Rate program began a decade ago to provide communities’ public libraries and schools with the communications tools and resources necessary to share information and educate America’s children,” said Senator Olympia Snowe. “While the first ten years of the E-Rate have helped schools and libraries upgrade and build their technology infrastructure, maintaining and upgrading these public institutions will require a continued effort and continued support of the program. Today’s report outlines how essential the E-Rate is to our country’s future.”

Over 30,000 applications for E-Rate discounts are filed each year from all corners of the country. School and library discounts, which range between 20% and 90%, are based upon poverty level, with the lowest income applicants receiving the deepest discounts. The report released today highlights a handful of E-Rate recipients.

- *Ho’okena Elementary School* in Hawaii, a community where 70% of the population are migrant farmers who live in homes that lack telephones, let alone computers. The E-Rate has transformed the school’s operations by enabling the school to provide every classroom a working telephone, cable television access and Internet connectivity. The teachers routinely participate in professional development activities offered by the school district via E-Rate supported videoconferencing. According to Kela Luczon, the school’s technology coordinator, “Our kids leave here knowing how to use scanners, digital cameras and email to reach and interact with someone in another country. They have 21st Century skills even though they are not growing up in a 21st Century environment.”

- *Archdiocese of Boston Catholic Schools*, a socio-economically diverse parochial school system where E-Rate support allows up to 6,000 students to engage in

distance learning opportunities on a daily basis. Through the high-speed access supported by the E-Rate, students at Cathedral High School, an Archdiocesan school, take online calculus courses for college and high school credit that equip them with the information and communication literacy skills they need to thrive and succeed in post-secondary institutions.

- ***Woodland Library Cooperative*** in southern Michigan serves 36 public libraries and roughly 525,000 patrons within a 4,600 square-mile radius and uses E-Rate support to allow community members to stay in-touch via the Internet with friends and family members serving in Iraq. These libraries have also become critical business and employment resource centers for local professionals who lack reliable Internet access at home and for community members in search of new jobs or careers.

- ***Clark County School District*** in Nevada has leveraged its E-Rate discounts to establish a virtual high school to support its rapidly growing student population. Using E-Rate supported services, the district's distance learning program offers synchronous and asynchronous instruction to the district's over 300,000 public school students. According to Dr. Phil Brody, the district's Assistant Superintendent and Chief Technology Officer, E-Rate has helped the district provide "the same application or service to all of the students in the district – those at the most affluent school and those at the poorest school – at the same time. It creates an element of equity."

A full copy of the report is available online at: www.edlinc.org and www.nctet.org. The report was commissioned by EdLiNC and NCTET and made possible through the generous support of AT&T, Best Buy, Cox Communications, Education Networks of America (ENA) and Verizon. The report was researched, written and managed by the Bernstein Strategy Group.

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The National Coalition for Technology in Education and Training (NCTET) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that promotes and supports the effective use of technology to improve education and training in America by acting as a convener, catalyst and resource for relevant and timely information. www.nctet.org

The Education and Libraries Networks Coalition (EdLiNC) represents the viewpoint of public and private schools and libraries dealing with the implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The Coalition seeks to expand the use of educational technologies in schools and libraries by making sure that these entities receive affordable rates guaranteed to them in the Universal Service Provisions of the Telecommunications Act. www.edlinc.org



Feb. 26, 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**NEW REPORT FINDS THAT
E-RATE CONNECTS COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS
TO 21ST CENTURY ACADEMIC AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

ARLINGTON, Va. – The E-Rate program, which helps supply schools and libraries with telecommunications services, has transformed America’s schools and libraries into modern institutions, but its mission is not yet complete, according a report released today by two education coalitions. The report, “E-Rate: 10 Years of Connecting Kids and Community,” was released by the Education and Libraries Networks Coalition (EdLiNC) and the National Coalition for Technology in Education and Training (NCTET).

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA), a member of the coalitions that released the report, applauded the success of the E-Rate program. “Archimedes once said, ‘Give me a lever long enough and I will move the world.’ E-Rate is the lever that has allowed school districts to expand the possibilities of integrating technology into education,” said AASA Executive Director Paul D. Houston. “It has broadened the horizon for America’s school children, whether they are in Detroit, Mich., or rural Montana.”

The new report indicates that E-Rate-supported connectivity has increased the overall number of public classrooms with Internet access from 14% in 1996 to 95% in 2005. After 10 years of E-Rate support, more than 90% of classrooms in rural, high-minority and low-income school districts now have Internet connections, allowing them to leverage modern communication tools to support student achievement. However, there is work yet to be done. Though schools districts across America have been connected to the Internet, E-Rate must now focus on increasing the quality of connectivity. Only through the highest levels of telecommunications access can school districts bring high-quality distance learning, research and professional development to their classrooms.

E-Rate is a ground-breaking telecommunications program created in 1997 that provides deep discounts on telecommunications, Internet access and internal networking to America's public and private schools as well as public libraries. Since its inception, the E-Rate has provided nearly \$19 billion in discounted services. Over 30,000 applications for E-Rate discounts are filed each year nationwide. School and library discounts, which range between 20% and 90%, are based upon poverty level, with the lowest income applicants receiving the deepest discounts.

A full copy of the report is available online at: www.edlinc.org and www.nctet.org. The report was commissioned by EdLiNC and NCTET and made possible through the generous support of AT&T, Best Buy, Cox Communications, Education Networks of America (ENA) and Verizon. The report was researched, written and managed by the Bernstein Strategy Group.

About AASA

The American Association of School Administrators, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for more than 13,000 educational leaders across the United States. AASA's mission is to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to the highest quality public education for all children. AASA's major focus is standing up for public education. For more information, visit www.aasa.org.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 28, 2007

**Press Statement by Brian Talbott, Executive Director of the
Association of Education Service Agencies on New Report, "*E-
Rate: 10 Years of Connecting Kids and Community*"**

WASHINGTON, DC -- "The E-Rate program is a critical component of our nation's education technology infrastructure. Thanks to the success of the E-Rate program over the past decade, students in the 21st century have access to the best information, resources, and academic opportunities that the world has to offer. The E-Rate program is helping to transform education into a vehicle to meet the needs of American families and businesses."

About AESA

The Association of Education Service Agencies is a 501(c)(6) tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation headquartered in Arlington, VA. AESA is a national organization representing over 630 Educational Service Agencies in 43 states. The mission of AESA and the ESAs they support is to provide services and experiences, which result in increased student learning.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
February 28, 2007

Press Statement by Keith Krueger, CEO, Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) on New Report, *"E-Rate: 10 Years of Connecting Kids and Community"*

WASHINGTON, DC -- "The E-Rate is quite simply the most important national funding source for education technology. Without it, meaningful education technology initiatives, ranging from online professional development and assessment to videostreaming, would not be possible. Our nation's schools and libraries are fortunate that four visionary Senators -- Rockefeller, Snowe, Exon and Kerrey -- and Representative Markey grasped early on the importance of connecting classrooms to the Internet's vast resources. CoSN believes the E-Rate has been a tremendous success over the past ten years and it clearly meets a continuing and future need."

About the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)

The Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) is the country's premier voice in education technology leadership with a mission to serve as the national organization for K-12 technology leaders who use technology strategically to ultimately improve teaching and learning. CoSN provides products and services to support and nurture leadership development, advocacy, coalition building, and awareness of emerging technologies.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 28, 2007

Press Statement by Don Knezek, CEO, International Society for Technology
in Education on New Report, *"E-Rate: 10 Years of Connecting Kids and
Community"*

WASHINGTON, DC -- "For educators and students, the 10th anniversary of the E-Rate is truly something to be celebrated. As the report released today amply demonstrates, E-Rate has played a pivotal role in revolutionizing how students learn, educators teach, and communities engage with the global economy. Fueled by the E-Rate, students in Fayette County, Kentucky have the opportunity to develop online science lessons with staff at UCLA; teachers spread across 17 rural districts in east Texas are able to collaborate online on a variety of professional development activities and operate a virtual high school; and job seekers in southern Michigan use their local libraries' Internet access to create resumes, research job openings, and apply for unemployment benefits. ISTE recognizes E-Rate's decade of success but submits that the E-Rate has much work still to do in maintaining existing services and paving the way for our schools and libraries to adopt new and even more exciting online educational applications and services."

About The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE®)

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE®) is the trusted source for professional development, knowledge generation, advocacy, and leadership for innovation. A nonprofit membership organization, ISTE® provides leadership and service to improve teaching, learning, and school leadership by advancing the effective use of technology in PK–12 and teacher education. Home of the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS), the Center for Applied Research in Educational Technology (CARET), and the National Educational Computing Conference (NECC), ISTE® represents more than 85,000 professionals worldwide. We support our members with information, networking opportunities, and guidance as they face the challenge of transforming education. Visit <http://www.iste.org> or call (800) 336-5191 to learn more about ISTE® and its new initiatives—including the next generation of NETS for Students, Teachers, and Administrators.



Great Public Schools for Every Child

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 28, 2007

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E-Rate 10th Anniversary Underscores Progress in Closing Technology Gap *NEA applauds program for giving students access to 21st century learning tools*

WASHINGTON—John Wilson, executive director of the National Education Association, told a panel on Capitol Hill that the difference E-Rate has made in closing the technology gap between lower income and more affluent schools is compelling evidence of its success.

“NEA is committed to ensuring every child has great public schools, and the E-Rate program is a key component of that,” said Wilson. “NEA was deeply involved in the conception and passage of E-Rate, and we take great pleasure and pride in its achievements.”

Wilson took part in a briefing today that coincides with the release of a new report, “E-Rate: 10 Years of Connecting Kids and Community.” He said teachers and other educators commend the program for helping students acquire the skills they need to be effective citizens, workers and leaders in the 21st century.

E-Rate, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, provides deep discounts on telecommunications, Internet access and internal networking to America’s public and private schools and public libraries. Congress approved the program in 1997 as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

“Ten years ago, relatively few classrooms had Internet access, and the disparity in access between schools serving lower income students and those serving their more affluent peers was dramatic. Higher income classrooms were more than twice as likely to have Internet access,” said Wilson. “Now, virtually all schools have Internet access.”

The report credits E-Rate with increasing the overall number of public school classrooms with Internet access from 14 percent in 1996 to 95 percent in 2005. It also finds E-Rate allows 100 percent of public libraries to provide free Internet access to their communities.

“We don’t have to look any further than E-rate to see how policymakers, educators and the community can work together to craft policies that improve education,” said Reg Weaver, NEA president. “We all have a shared responsibility to provide students with a quality public education, and we should use this program as a model for other school reform initiatives.”

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The National Education Association is the nation’s largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators and students preparing to become teachers.



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Statement on E-Rate 10-Year Anniversary Report *“E-Rate: 10 Years of Connecting Kids and Community”*

CHICAGO (February 27, 2007) – The E-Rate has been a vital tool for supporting parent participation in schools. Through E-Rate-supported connectivity, parents are able to see their children’s grades, track their student’s progress, and communicate on a regular basis with teachers.

E-Rate funding is also a critical component of helping school districts to meet to NCLB requirements to provide parents and the public with report cards on the progress of the district and its individual schools.

About PTA

PTA comprises nearly 6 million parents and other concerned adults devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. PTA is a registered 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization that prides itself on being a powerful voice for children, a relevant resource for parents, and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who is concerned with the education, health, and welfare of children and youth.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 28, 2007

Press Statement by Anne Bryant, Executive Director of the National School Boards Association on New Report, *"E-Rate: 10 Years of Connecting Kids and Community"*

WASHINGTON, DC -- "The E-Rate program has helped tremendously to level the learning opportunities between students in poor rural schools and wealthy suburban areas. School boards everywhere have embraced the E-Rate as a way to ensure that nearly all of their classrooms are connected and to give students a critical piece of the 21st century learning experience."

About NSBA

Founded in 1940, the National School Boards Association is a not-for profit federation of state associations of school boards representing 95,000 local school board members throughout the United States. Its mission is to foster excellence and equity in public elementary and secondary education through local school board leadership. NSBA represents the school board perspective in working with federal government agencies and national organizations that impact education, and provides vital information and services to state associations of school boards throughout the nation.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 28, 2007

**Press Statement by Dr. Karen M. Ristau, President of the National
Catholic Educational Association on New Report, *"E-Rate: 10 Years of
Connecting Kids and Community***

WASHINGTON, DC -- The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), on behalf of its 2.3 million students and 7,500 hundred Catholic schools, has been a strong supporter of the E-Rate program since its inception. The positioning of the program within the Universal Service Fund has enabled our schools to apply directly for discounts that enable them to achieve the connectivity commensurate with goals and needs described in their technology plans. Without the E-Rate program, many of our schools, particularly the 44% located in urban areas, would not be able to provide Internet access to students to enhance the learning environment of their classrooms. Congratulations on 10 years of outstanding service to all of America's schools and libraries!

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February 28, 2007

Press Statement by Ken Wasch, President, Software & Information Industry
Association on New Report, *"E-Rate: 10 Years of Connecting Kids and
Community"*

WASHINGTON, DC – "The E-Rate has enabled our nation's students and teachers to access the Internet and its many educational resources and opportunities, including those provided by SIIA member e-learning publishers. SIIA members depend on the nation's schools for a skilled high-tech workforce, and view technology and the E-Rate as an important tool to ensure that students are well prepared for success. We look forward to the next 10 years of federal E-Rate support as schools and libraries look for ever-more-robust technology services to meet their evolving educational mission and needs."

About SIIA

The Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA) is the principal trade association for the software and digital content industry. SIIA provides global services in government relations, business development, corporate education and intellectual property protection to more than 800 leading software and information companies. For further information, visit www.siiia.net.

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