



IDG News Service

Bush details broadband goals

Speech promotes nationwide broadband to boost productivity, U.S. economy

http://www.infoworld.com/article/04/06/24/HNbushbroadband_1.html

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WASHINGTON - U.S. President George Bush on Thursday renewed his call to make broadband Internet available nationwide by 2007, promoting high-speed access via both power-line and wireless technology in an effort to give residents of the country choice in their broadband offerings

Bush, during a speech at the U.S. Department of Commerce in Washington, D.C., promoted nationwide broadband access as a way to help U.S. workers become more productive and improve the country's economy.

Workers who are more productive make more money, Bush said. "Broadband saves costs throughout the economy," he added. "The quality of life of our citizens is going to improve dramatically through this technology."

Bush first called for nationwide broadband access by 2007 in March during a speech that focused mostly on home ownership. But on Thursday, Bush dedicated most of a 30-plus minute speech to broadband and technology policy, calling for Congress to pass an Internet access tax moratorium bill and praising the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for allowing the large incumbent telephone carriers to refuse to share fiber optic networks with competitors.

The "burdensome regulations" of the telephone system are outdated for new technologies, Bush said. "I don't think these regulations should apply to 21st century technology," he added.

Bush was shown several broadband demonstrations before his speech, and he promoted broadband over power lines, or BPL, and wireless technologies such as Wi-Fi and mobile wireless as ways for U.S. residents to have broadband choices. Groups including the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) have protested the rollout of BPL to the FCC, saying it interferes with existing radio frequency users, including ham radios. An ARRL executive didn't immediately respond to a request for a comment on Bush's speech.

But Bush said he's confident the Department of Commerce will come up with interference rules that work for both sides, and he praised BPL as a "great opportunity" to increase the availability of broadband. Alternatives to cable or DSL (digital subscriber

lines) such as BPL and wireless broadband are needed for the price of broadband to be affordable to consumers, Bush said.

"If you have an alternative, you're likely to get a better price and better quality," he added.

For wireless broadband to grow, U.S. companies need more access to radio spectrum, Bush said. He called for Congress to pass the Commercial Spectrum Enhancement Act, which authorizes the sale of government-controlled spectrum to private companies. Also Thursday, the Department of Commerce issued a report called "Spectrum Policy for the 21st Century," which includes a recommendation for the government to establish a spectrum test-bed for innovative new technologies. A summary of the spectrum policy paper is available at http://www.ntia.doc.gov/reports/specpolini/factsheetspecpolini_06242004.htm.

"A wise use of that spectrum is to help our economy grow," Bush said.

Bush repeated his support for a ban on Internet access taxes, and he called on the U.S. Congress to finish its work on a moratorium, which some senators have opposed because of concerns that it would prohibit states from taxing IP (Internet Protocol) services such as voice over IP. Taxes would slow the adoption of broadband, Bush said.

"If the goal is to spread broadband, it doesn't make sense to tax it while we're spreading it," Bush said.

Bush praised efforts to use broadband to provide distance education and to allow doctors to diagnose problems by looking at scans or charts over the Internet. **Bush also saw a demonstration from ObjectVideo, a Reston, Virginia, company that uses artificial intelligence software to analyze data transmitted through video surveillance cameras. ObjectVideo's VEW software runs all objects in a camera's view against threat-specific preprogrammed rules, then alerts security officers when an object violates those rules.**

The technology is a way for the U.S. to protect its borders, Bush said. Praising distance-learning efforts, he said they "will mean we have a more educated population when we have broadband spread throughout the nation," he said.

Lawmakers and regulators can help broadband grow, Bush said. "There's a role for us here in Washington - to help the entrepreneurs and innovators in our country succeed," he said.

The Business Software Alliance (BSA), a trade group representing major software vendors, praised Bush's speech and his call for increased broadband deployment.

"The high tech industry continues to promote increased investment in broadband networks and technologies," BSA president and chief executive officer Robert

Holleyman said in an e-mail. "The future of the Internet and a healthy global e-commerce marketplace are dependent on rapid and ubiquitous deployment of fast, interactive, content-rich and affordable broadband services. More importantly, the quality of life for American citizens is improved through access to broadband because of the myriad of opportunities provided by high speed access to the Internet."