

# Washington Hotline



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Legislation to create a National Research and Education Network has been reintroduced by Sen. Albert Gore Jr. (D-TN), the chief sponsor of NREN bills in previous Congresses, and by Rep. George Brown Jr. (D-CA), the new Chairman of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee. The High-Performance Computing Act of 1991 was introduced as S. 272 on January 24 by Sen. Gore with 18 cosponsors (Sens. Hollings, Kennedy, Pressler, Ford, Breaux, Bingaman, Ross, Kerry, Kasten, Glenn, Jeffords, Kerrey, Reid, Durenberger, Hatfield, Kohl, Conrad, and Riegle). The companion bill, HR 656, was introduced on January 28 by Rep. Brown with four cosponsors (Reps. Valentine, Boehlert, Mineta, and Browder).

The bills, which represent only a starting point for further hearings and further development, are almost identical to S. 1067 as passed by the Senate last fall in a version which was not very satisfactory to the education and library communities.

Sen. Gore spoke about the NREN at the January 13 President's Program at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Chicago. He referred to this in his introductory remarks on S. 272 (January 24, 1991, CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, pp. S 1198-203 for remarks and text):

"The library community has been at the forefront in using computer and networking technology in education. For years, they have had electronic card catalogs which allow students to track down books in seconds. Now they are developing electronic text systems which will store books in electronic form. When coupled to a national network like the NREN, such a digital library could be used by students and educators throughout the country, in underfunded urban schools and in isolated rural school districts, where good libraries are few and far between.

I recently spoke to the American Library Association Annual meeting in Chicago and heard many librarians describe how the NREN could transform their lives. They are excited about the new opportunities made possible by this technology."

The ALA Council passed a Resolution on the National Research and Education Network (CD #40) on January 16 to reaffirm its support of the NREN and recommend elements to be incorporated in NREN legislation. The elements include eligibility of all types of libraries to link to the NREN as resource providers and as access points for users, and high-capacity network connections with all 50 states.

ALA has also joined with 20 other education, library and computing organizations and associations to identify objectives for NREN legislation, and to combine forces in communicating this to Congress. This Partnership for the NREN sent a joint letter on January 25 to key congressional offices outlining a policy framework for the NREN.

The Administration's budget for FY 1991 includes an increase of \$149 million (to a total of \$638 million) for its high performance computing and communications initiative. These funds would be spread over eight federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation, and part of these funds would help develop the NREN.