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A Summary of Technology Accomplishments of the 106th Congress

Technology advances empower Americans to compete and succeed in the new millennium. And advancements will only continue at the rapid rate demanded by the New Economy if Congress supports technology policy that continually address the needs of the high tech community. The Republican Congress recognizes this vital commitment, and during the 106th Congress, accomplished the following:

American Competitiveness in the Twenty-First Century Act (“H-1B Visas”)

Public Law 106-313 (S. 2045)

Allows more workers with special skills to enter the U.S. on a temporary basis in the H-1B visa category, notably in fields connected to information technology, and also provides training for Americans already in the workforce to meet those unfilled employment needs. The bill also looks to the future by including incentives to encourage more young people to study mathematics, engineering, and computer science.

China Trade Bill

Public Law 106-286 (H.R. 4444)

Allows the President to grant permanent normal trade relation (PNTR) status to the People’s Republic of China, in accordance with U.S. and China participation in the World Trade Organization. Under normalized U.S./China trade, China must dramatically lower trade barriers, giving U.S. producers unprecedented access to China’s one billion-plus consumers. Also gives relief to American domestic industries and workers for market disruption from Chinese imports, and creates a Congressional-Executive Commission to monitor human rights in China.

Electronic Signatures in Interstate Commerce

Public Law 106-229 (S. 761)

Assures the legal recognition of electronic signatures for contracts and other electronic transactions conducted on the Internet.

Foreign Sales Corporations Trade Compliance

Public Law 106-519 (H.R. 4986)

Modifies U.S. law to comply with a recent World Trade Organization (WTO) ruling regarding exporting companies' tax treatment of Foreign Sales Corporations.

Launching Our Communities Access to Local Television (LOCAL TV) Act

Public Law 106-553 (H.R. 5548)

Authorizes loan guarantees to facilitate access to local television broadcast signals in unserved and underserved areas.

Patent Application Improvements

Public Law 106-553 (H.R. 5548)

Provides a 19-percent increase for the Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) to assure the expedited examination and approval of patent applications. The total amount for the PTO, \$1.04 billion, was contained in the Fiscal Year 2001 Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Act.

Patent Protection for American Inventors

Public Law 106-113 (Included in H.R. 3194)

Modernizes and reforms America's successful patent system; among its reforms are reducing patent filing fees, providing a "first inventor" defense, and guaranteeing a minimum 17-year patent term.

Research & Development Tax Credit

Public Law 106-170 (H.R. 1180)

Maintains U.S. leadership in cutting-edge technology by providing \$18 billion over 10 years in tax relief by extending the Research & Development tax credit.

Satellite Communications Competition and Privatization Act

Public Law 106-180 (S. 376)

Encourages privatization in the international satellite communications market and permits a merger between two major corporations. Importantly for consumers, the bill provides that international satellite organizations no longer will enjoy government preferences that insulated them from competition, regulatory authority, tax liabilities, and antitrust restrictions.

Satellite Home Viewers Improvement Act

Public Law 106-113 (Included in H.R. 3194; originally H.R. 1554)

Pro-consumer legislation which allows satellite companies for the first time to beam local broadcast signals to customers who use either satellite dishes or big backyard dishes.

Small Business Investment Improvement Act

Public Law 106-9 (H.R. 68/S. 364)

Makes more investment capital available to small businesses that are seeking to grow and to hire new employees.

Tax Simplification of Wireless Telephone Calls

Public Law 106-252 (H.R. 4391)

Creates a nationwide, uniform system for the taxation of wireless calls. By simplifying the taxation and billing of wireless calls, each transaction would no longer be subject to multiple taxing laws, and consumers will benefit from reduced rates and fewer billing headaches.

Truth in Regulating Act

Public Law 106-312 (S. 1198)

Establishes a three-year pilot project for the General Accounting Office to report to Congress on economically significant rules of federal agencies in order to assure that bureaucrats are using the best available resources to predict the costs and benefits of proposed new rules before their effects are borne on communities, businesses, and citizens.

Wireless Telecommunications and Public Safety Act

Public Law 106-81 (S. 800)

Designates “911” as the universal emergency number for all phones — wire-line and wireless — and expands the areas covered by wireless telephone service.

Worker Economic Opportunity Act

Public Law 106-202 (S. 2323)

Overtures a Clinton Administration opinion that would have jeopardized the continued availability of employer-offered stock options to hourly employees, thereby assuring that it makes no difference if you work in the corporate boardroom or on the factory floor — everyone should be able to share in the success of the company.

Year 2000 Readiness and Responsibility Act

Public Law 106-37 (H.R. 775/S. 96)

Protected working Americans from having to subsidize hefty legal costs from frivolous lawsuits fueled by anticipated economic consequences of Year 2000 computer problems; this law gave employers incentives to fix possible computer problems before they became lawsuit targets.

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