



## **Task Force Touts Virtues Of Expanded Broadband Network**

The Sacramento Bee

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January 17, 2008

A robust broadband network in California is crucial to the state's economic health, and the government and the private sector must cooperate to make affordable high-speed Internet available to all residents, a state task force reported Thursday.

The California Broadband Task Force released a study that said 94 percent of California residents have broadband access, but more than 1.4 million mostly rural Californians are still stuck in the Internet's slow lane. Only with ubiquitous access to broadband can the state economy stay competitive with countries that have much faster and more sophisticated networks.

"Just as California has invested in other critical infrastructure such as roads electricity and water, the CBFT believes the state must seize the opportunity to promote private-sector investment, leverage public-private partnerships and lead the effort to increase broadband availability and adoption," the task force wrote.

The group was formed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and is composed of representatives from the telecommunications industry, as well as education and state and local government.

Among its recommendations is to build out a strong and pervasive broadband system using tax incentives, bond money and providing easier access to government-owned facilities.

Other recommendations include:

- Streamlining the permit process to make it easier to build such networks.
- Expanding the opportunities for people to use the Internet by making it more available in schools and other public places, and making low-cost computers available to low-income families.
- Encouraging and rewarding long-term research in broadband technologies, both at universities and in the private sector.
- Creating a statewide e-health network that that will help doctors remotely diagnose illnesses.

- Encouraging schools to put more educational content online, increasing the availability for off-campus learning.