

The Race to Close the Digital Divide is On—State and National Leaders Support Groundbreaking Digital Literacy Initiative

Published Tuesday, Jul. 26, 2011

SACRAMENTO, Calif., July 26, 2011 -- /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The **Race to Close the Digital Divide** announces its statewide campaign to promote computer literacy and Internet use among underserved Californians. Working with faith-based organizations around the state, the Race educates families about the many economic, educational and social benefits of the Internet and helps connect them to resources that break down the barriers of cost, equipment and literacy. Churches with the highest number of new subscribers will win a free computer lab.

The Race has attracted the support of prominent state and national officials, as well as community and faith leaders committed to closing the digital divide. Supporters include California Assembly Speaker John A. Perez, former Mayor of San Francisco Willie Brown, Congresswoman Doris Matsui and Mark E. Whitlock, II, Director of Community Initiatives for USC Center for Religion and Civic Engagement.

"More than 13 million Californians are without access to the Internet at home. For those Californians, finding job opportunities, accessing benefits and educational resources is challenging," said Speaker John A. Perez (D-Los Angeles). "I support the Race to Close the Digital Divide so that every Californian has the tools to find new opportunities for themselves and their families."

While the deployment and adoption of broadband technology is steadily increasing across the nation and within California, and more Californians use cell phones to go online, there still remains a vast difference in access among socio-economic groups, according to a 2011 Statewide Survey: Californians and Information Technology by the Public Policy Institute of California.

"Millions of Americans are without any Internet access at home, causing a barrier to economic achievement and leaving them vulnerable and disadvantaged," said Willie L. Brown, Jr., former Mayor of San Francisco. "It is time to give everyone equal access to this important and vital tool."

Sacramento area Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA), a national leader in technology and communications, also supports the Race to Close the Digital Divide. She has introduced numerous bills to promote Internet adoption, including the Broadband Affordability Act, which would expand the 'Lifeline Assistance' Program for low-income telephone customers to those who subscribe to home broadband access.

"I am a strong proponent of closing the digital divide by ensuring all families have equal access to the Internet. Our way of life is increasingly reliant on technology and the Internet for everything from gathering information, to finding jobs and social networking," said Matsui. "Unfortunately, if you don't have access to broadband services, you are simply at a competitive disadvantage."

The Race targets five regions of California with the lowest rates of home Internet access: San Diego, Los Angeles, the Central Valley, the Bay Area and Sacramento, and tackles the common barriers to Internet adoption by showing people where to go in their communities to find information about discounted Internet service, discounted computers and FREE computer literacy training.

"The Race is an innovative boots-on-the-ground approach to reaching the targeted communities in California that need help with Internet connectivity and computer literacy the most," said Reverend

Mark E. Whitlock II, Executive Director of USC Cecil Murray Center for Community Engagement and Director of Community Initiatives for USC Center for Religion and Civic Engagement. "By working through churches, the campaign can break through the barriers to Internet adoption by sending information to community members from a trusted messenger."

The Race to Close the Digital Divide runs through October 30, 2011.

For more information or to join the Race, please call 1-888-235-1541, email us at gc2day@gmail.com, or click the link to go to our Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/RaceToCloseTheDigitalDivide>

*An English and Spanish PSA has been provided by Speaker of the Assembly John A. Perez, and can be found by clicking on the following link: <http://youtu.be/OMXyN51g3OM>

**Spanish PSA: http://youtu.be/-ZuWo2gV_Nc

The Race to Close the Digital Divide campaign was made possible through the generous funding of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act within the U.S. Department of Commerce and the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), who was awarded a \$7.2 million grant as part of the Broadband Awareness and Adoption program.

SOURCE Race to Close the Digital Divide