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NEWS RELEASE

PO BOX 004
CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
Rita Malley
(609) 777-2600

TRENTON, NJ 08625
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Gov. Christie Whitman Signs Bill Creating \$55 Million Higher Technology Fund; Outlines Her Vision For Technology in Schools

Gov. Christie Whitman today built upon her vision for educational technology when she signed legislation which will provide \$55 million in grants to the state's colleges and universities to train students in technology and allow those institutions to upgrade their own information technology and connectivity.

Joining the Governor was Len J Lauer, President and Chief Executive Officer of Bell Atlantic of New Jersey, who announced discounted rates ranging from 31 to 72 percent for Internet access and other telecommunications services for New Jersey schools and libraries.

"It is vitally important that our colleges and universities develop the infrastructure that they need to ride the wave of technological innovation that is sweeping across the country and the world," said Gov. Whitman.

"The discount program also moves New Jersey even closer to the realization of my goal for technology in New Jersey's schools: the day when every student in every school is using technology to help meet the new, quality academic standards we've set for our children's education," Whitman said.

"In this day and age, high standards and high tech go hand in hand," the Governor added.

The legislation, A-3029, creates the Higher Education Technology Infrastructure Fund. The fund will provide \$50 million in grants to colleges and universities and \$5 million to the New Jersey State Library to make its resources more available through technology.

The fund will be financed through a general obligation bond issued by the Education Facilities Authority.

Today's bill signing continues the Governor's commitment to enhancing the technology available to students and preparing them for the future. Governor Whitman has leveraged over \$600 million in state, federal, local and

private resources to bring world- class educational technology to schools, colleges and libraries over the next five years.

"As today's students take their place in the world in the 21st century, they'll need real knowledge for the real world," Whitman said. That's what we're giving them. From kindergarten to graduation -- whether at the high school or college level, our students will be immersed in the high tech future."

"We have taken the lead in establishing technology as a priority by creating a new category of state aid -- Distance Learning Network Aid -- and by coordinating the local efforts that will lead to a statewide network of schools interconnected through technology," said State Education Commissioner Leo Klagholz.

Gov. Whitman's goals for enhancing the technological abilities of New Jersey students include:

- Providing high-speed Internet access in every one of the state's 100,000 classrooms by Sept., 2001.
- Distance learning interactive television in every school.
- One computer for every five students in each school compared to one for every nine students today.
- Coordination of state, county and local resources toward the application of technology in schools throughout the state.

Gov. Whitman has made educational technology a high priority of her administration. The Governor's recent initiatives include:

- \$50 million in this year's budget, part of a 5-year plan to spend at least \$250 million to bring technology to every school in the state.
- The incorporation of the use of technology into the new academic content standards and into the workplace readiness standards.
- The new school funding law also includes funding of \$122 per student in state and local resources to meet the Governor's goal of providing one computer for every five students, plus related software and peripherals, along with funding for replacement every five years.
- \$10 million to create Educational Technology Training Centers in each of the state's 21 counties. These centers will provide teachers with ongoing training to learn about the latest technological advances. The teachers will then be able to share their knowledge with their students in the classroom. The centers will be created with the help of a public-private partnership called Tech Corps N. J.

In addition, the sharply discounted rates for high-speed communications services for schools and libraries were achieved as a result of an agreement negotiated by the state Board of Public Utilities and the Ratepayer Advocate with Bell Atlantic. The agreement will result in the linkage of the state's 3,000 public, private and parochial schools and 310 libraries to an advanced electronic network by the end of the year 2001, nine years sooner than their original target date. The agreement, called "Access New Jersey" has an estimated value of \$130 million over a four-year period in savings, equipment and services for schools and libraries.

As school begins this year, the linkage will enable students to download information and remote resources from the Internet and other distance learning services faster and cheaper than ever before.

The New Jersey State Department of Education will be coordinating services with Bell Atlantic for Access New Jersey. The department will ensure that the educational community shares in the benefits of the discounted tariff rates, equipment access, and high-speed services.

