

Members, Committee Chairmen, Resident Commissioner, and Delegates

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Colleague:

Over the past 30 months, the usage of the Internet by Members and Committees has experienced tremendous growth. The House wants to build on this momentum to provide access that is more effective to Congress by our constituents. At the same time, the resources required to achieve these ends must be carefully controlled to maintain budgetary discipline. I wanted to let you know about changes in several Internet-related services that will take effect in 1998.

Internet Access Fee: As you know, beginning in 1998 some of the legislative information your office uses will only be accessible via the Internet or the House-internal "Intranet." Therefore, the \$150 per year Internet access fee will no longer be charged as of calendar year 1998.

WEB Site Maintenance: The usage of House Information Resources (HIR) resources by offices in support of their WEB sites has varied widely over the past year. Some offices require no assistance, other have used virtually hundreds of hours of HIR consulting services. The goal will be for each office to maintain their own WEB site starting in 1998. Many offices are successfully managing and maintaining their own site today, and this task will become simpler as software tools continue to evolve.

In order to equitably manage these scarce resources, these changes will occur beginning now:

- HIR will provide at no cost to offices WEB authoring tools to support the office's own maintenance of their WEB site.
- HIR will continue to offer classes and seminars to educate staff on how to maintain office WEB sites.
- HIR will invest in automating typical functions to improve Member staff productivity.

Beginning in 1998 the number of free individual consulting hours will be limited to 10 hours per year for offices with an existing WEB site, and 20 hours for the first year of a new WEB site. Additional resources may be purchased from HIR, or any other vendor of your choosing. Additionally, HIR will continue to provide seminars and events to assist offices at no-charge.

Limits on WEB-site size: In the 1994 Internet Guidelines, a limit of 5 million Characters (MB) per Member, and 20 MB per Committee was established. Effective immediately, the guideline for Member usage will be doubled to 10MB.

House Rule XI, clause 2(e)(4) provides that: "Each committee shall, to them maximum extent feasible, make its publications available in electronic form." To encourage the dissemination of official information over the Internet, there will be no limit or charge for the publication of required information by Committees. The guideline for other information will be doubled to 40 MB per Committee, which will be divided equally between the majority and minority Members of the Committee.

There will be no charge for excess usage, but offices will be requested to respect these limits. As our usage of the Internet develops, these limits will be revisited from time to time.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the Committee on House Oversight at x58281 (majority) or x52061 (minority).

Best Regards,

Bill Thomas
Chairman