



**NCLIS**

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Libraries and Information Science

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## News Release

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### For Immediate Release

## **NCLIS Urges Congress to Make Moratorium on Internet Access Taxes Permanent**

Washington, DC USA October 15, 2007 --- With the moratorium on Internet access taxes set to expire on November 1, 2007, the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) is concerned that new taxes will seriously impact citizen access to government information and submission of required information to the government.

Congress is currently considering legislation that addresses this issue. "The Permanent Internet Tax Freedom Act," introduced by Senators John Sununu (R-NH), John McCain (R-AZ), Ron Wyden (D-OR) and 20 co-sponsors, will prohibit taxes on Internet access on a permanent basis. NCLIS urges Congress to consider this legislation carefully.

Five years ago, Congress established the *E-Government Act of 2002* (PL 107-347) to "promote use of the Internet and other information technologies to provide increased opportunities for citizen participation in Government." Among the many e-government initiatives, two have been noteworthy, electronic tax filing and Medicare Form Part D. Of special note, however, Internet use has also been important to citizens in emergencies, and their ability to access the Internet in public libraries, as was the case in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, must not be dismissed lightly.

"In that difficult time," Dr. Beth Fitzsimmons, NCLIS Chairman, said, "the advantages of e-government were dramatically demonstrated when citizens were able to file FEMA forms, unemployment forms and job applications electronically. Increasingly, public libraries are helping citizens not only access and file these forms but also to access other Federal, state, and local government information by using the Internet."

"Twice in the past," according to Dr. Fitzsimmons, "a temporary moratorium on Internet access taxes has been in place. NCLIS, with a statutory responsibility to advise the President and Congress in matters having to do with libraries and information science respectfully encourages members of Congress to give 'The Permanent Internet Tax Freedom Act' their most careful consideration."

An independent agency of the Federal government, NCLIS has as part of its legislated mission a responsibility to study and survey the “library and information needs of the Nation, including the special and information needs of rural areas, or economically, socially, or culturally deprived persons, and of elderly persons....” In many rural areas, the public library is the only place in the community with high-speed Internet and free computers for local citizen use, and taxes on Internet use will seriously impede citizen access to the Internet in libraries.

“To tax citizens for Internet access in order to fill out tax forms and Medicare forms required by the government is patently unfair and an economic burden for our citizens,” Chairman Fitzsimmons added. “If the government is increasingly requiring citizens to use the Internet, then Federal, state or local taxes on its use should be prohibited.”

### ***ABOUT NCLIS***

The U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) is a permanent, independent agency of the Federal government charged by Public Law 91-345 to advise the President and Congress on national and international library and information policies, to appraise and assess the adequacies and deficiencies of library and information resources and services, and to develop overall plans for meeting national library and information needs.