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**SIIA: E-Rate is Critical to Effectively Integrating Technology into Elementary and Secondary Schools and Libraries**

(Washington, DC) The Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA) submitted comments to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on April 5, 2002 in response to a Notice of Proposed Rule Making on the Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism, better known as the E-Rate, <http://www.siiia.net/govt/govt/eratetable0402.pdf>.

SIIA's goal is to enhance the E-Rate to better meet both the law's intent and the nation's education technology needs. SIIA's comments were based on the association's experience and that of its members in working with stakeholders to leverage the E-Rate and implement education technology solutions.

In the comments, SIIA President Ken Wasch cited the E-Rate as "critical to the efforts of eligible elementary and secondary schools and libraries to access the telecommunications, Internet and related technologies so important to their educational mission." SIIA has "been generally pleased with the administration, implementation and impact of the E-Rate . . . [and SIIA believes] continued federal leadership through the E-Rate is an essential element of the nation's effort to effectively integrate technology into instructional and management practices," continued Wasch.

The E-Rate was authorized as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and is administered by the FCC as part of Universal Service. Entering its fifth year, the E-Rate provides \$2.25 billion in annual discounts to enable schools and libraries to access and integrate telecommunications and Internet services for educational purposes.

"SIIA encourages the FCC to pursue program changes that appropriately recognize evolving technologies and related delivery models, while cautioning against overly prescriptive rules that may threaten the principle of competitive neutrality and the goal of program efficiency," explained Mark Schneiderman, SIIA Director of Education Policy. "For example," added Schneiderman, "while supporting the goals of accessibility, SIIA urges the FCC to not amend or supplement the existing FCC notice with a more explicit certification requirement that would be inconsistent with federal authority and other federal efforts." SIIA's comments on accessibility came in response to an explicit proposal for the FCC to enforce compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related disabilities laws.

For more information on SIIA's government affairs activities please visit <http://www.siiia.net/govt> or contact Rachel Haynes, SIIA PR Manager at [rhaynes@siiia.net](mailto:rhaynes@siiia.net) or +1.202.789.4461.

**About SIIA**

The Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA) is the principal trade association for the software and digital content industry. SIIA provides global services in government relations, business development, corporate education and intellectual property protection to more than 800 leading software and information companies. For further information, <http://www.siiia.net>.

The SIIA Education Division provides member companies with the market research, government advocacy and partnership opportunities that help to build and grow their business and their bottom line. The Education Division accomplishes this in various ways: key industry research, connections to venture funding resources, valuable federal policy representation and exclusive venues for networking with industry leaders.

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