August 5, 2002

The Honorable Dennis J. Hastert
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Richard A. Gephardt
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Dear Speaker Hastert and Minority Leader Gephardt:

We the undersigned institutions, associations, and organizations write to ask that you support S. 487, the Technology, Education and Copyright Harmonization Act of 2001, also known as the TEACH Act. In particular, we seek your assistance in ensuring that the House passes this bill before the end of the session.

The TEACH Act updates the existing distance learning exception to the Copyright Act to accommodate the growth of digital age distance learning. Among other things, the TEACH Act will enable educational institutions to develop the full potential of online distance education, expand educational opportunity, and enrich educational content for traditional and nontraditional students alike. The bill does this by allowing the distance learning exception to apply to “anytime, anywhere” learning and by expanding the categories of work that can be used in online distance education. This change in the law will permit multi-media educational content to be delivered digitally to locations where students can use an Internet-accessible computer. The TEACH Act also incorporates safeguards to respond to the concerns of copyright owners about distribution of digital content, including limiting distribution of online course material to enrolled students only, and requiring the use of technological measures to reasonably prevent the unauthorized retention and redistribution of such material.

The TEACH Act has broad bipartisan support. It was initially drafted after the United States Copyright Office completed an extensive study in May 1999, concluding that current copyright exceptions are not adequate to support digital distance learning. The TEACH Act (introduced in 2001) has been the subject of serious negotiation, and has the full support of both the education and content communities. It also has strong support in Congress. The House Judiciary Committee reported it favorably, with no dissent, on July 17, 2002. It was also unanimously approved by the Senate.

We ask that you work to ensure that the TEACH Act is passed before the end of the 107th Congress. Because of the broad bipartisan support for this bill, we hope you will consider placing it on the suspension calendar as soon as possible.

We appreciate your assistance in this important matter.

Sincerely,

American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of Law Libraries
American Council on Education
American Library Association
Association of American Universities
Association of Research Libraries
BayNet Distance Education Network, Wisconsin
Nancy L. Case, Media Supervisor, Alachua Co. Schools, Florida
Chicago Association of Law Libraries
Classroom Connect
Educause
Brenda S. Gonzalez, Supervisor, Instructional Information Services, Columbus Public Schools, Columbus, Ohio
Kathleen Guevremont, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, Monroe School District, Florida
Illinois Virtual Campus
International Society for Technology in Education
Virginia Moore Kruse, Wisconsin Intellectual Freedom Leadership Network
LakeNet Distanced Education Network, Wisconsin
Law Librarians Association of Wisconsin
Maine Township HS Dist. 207, Illinois
Mid-America Association of Law Libraries
Minnesota Association of Law Libraries
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of Independent Schools
National Education Association
Northern California Association of Law Libraries
Northeast Wisconsin Telecommunications Education Consortium (NEWTEC)
Northwest Missouri Educational Consortium
Peninsula Distance Education Network, Wisconsin (PenNet)
Pulaski Community School District, Pulaski, Wisconsin
Maureen Egan, Director, South Central Instructional Network Group, Portage, Wisconsin
South Florida Association of Law Libraries
Southeastern Association of the American Association of Law Libraries
Southern California Association of Law Libraries
Southern New England Law Librarians Association
The Consortium for School Networking
University Continuing Education Association
Virginia Association of Law Libraries
Dr. Roger Von Holzen, Director of Distance Learning, Northwest Missouri State University
Wisconsin Association of Distance Learning Networks (WADEN)
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction