Thank you President Faulkner. It is my honor to be here with the men and women who are committed to improving our quality of life through innovation, and who are laying the groundwork for the next important leap in Internet technology.

We are blessed to live in a world that is made virtually borderless by the Internet, where people from across the globe can share information and ideas in an instant, and our businesses and families communicate at speeds measured in kilobytes per second. Technological innovations like the Internet don't happen by accident. They are the product of forethought, visionary decision-making, and partnerships that often include government, industry, and academia. The Internet itself is perhaps the most successful example of this type of partnership, tracing its origins to the 1960's, when university researchers and government officials began discussing a “galactic network” of computers linked by telephone lines to share access to data and programs. The fruit of that partnership has given birth to the high-tech world we live in today and forever changed our homes, our businesses, and our schools.

Today, we are poised to make the next great leap forward in Internet technology. Across the nation, more than 200 universities have teamed with government and industry in a massive effort known as the Internet2 project, which will develop and deploy advanced network applications and technologies, and accelerate the creation of tomorrow’s Internet. Like the pioneers who first envisioned the Internet some 40 years ago, the Internet2 consortium is laying the foundation for a new revolution in communications that will affect every aspect of American life. Their work will not only give university researchers the ability to share massive amounts of data, but will also lead to a new wave of commercial development, economic growth, and job creation in industries that today exist only in the realm of ideas.

That is why I am proud to announce that the state of Texas will be contributing nearly $10 million towards this effort. I want to thank our friends in the academic world for bringing this important grant proposal to us, and my partners in state government, Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst and Speaker Tom Craddick, for joining me in supporting this vital research project. These funds, made available by the Texas Enterprise Fund, will put Texas institutions of higher learning on the cutting edge of networking capabilities, help Texas compete for research dollars and jobs in new industries, and enable the development of revolutionary Internet applications that will benefit academia, industry, and the public.

The Lonestar Education and Research Network, made up of 31 Texas colleges and universities, will use $7.5 million of
the total to create a sophisticated networking backbone that will connect universities in 14 Texas cities to the most advanced networks in the nation, including the Internet2 network and National LambdaRail, a new coast-to-coast optical fiber network that will be four times as fast as existing technology. When you consider that Louisiana is spending $40 million to connect only eight universities initially, the return on our investment will be tremendous. The remaining $2.5 million will be used to further the development of the Texas Internet Grid for Research and Education, which will give our universities the ability to collaborate and share high-performance computing, data storage and visualization resources as if they had access to a single virtual supercomputer.

Twenty years ago, personal computers were a luxury item that most families could only dream of one day owning. Today, they are found in millions of Texas homes, in libraries and public schools, even in coffee shops. Just ten years ago, we connected to the Internet at speeds that in hindsight seem mind-numbingly slow. Today, with high-speed Internet connections, downloading a web page can be as fast as turning a page in a book. Today, we enjoy wireless Internet access in our homes, in our vehicles and on our cell phones, we can watch entire movies online, we download in a matter of minutes what used to take hours, or even days, and we rightfully see these developments as a revolution in technology.

But because of the work of the men and women of Internet2, decades from now we may look back and wonder how we ever survived with such archaic technology. Texas is thankful for the work you do to foster innovation, we appreciate your efforts to transform the way we communicate with loved ones, how we conduct business and teach our children, and we are proud to partner with you to usher in a new era of Internet technology.

Thank you. And now it is my pleasure to introduce a leader who shares my commitment to creating opportunity for the people of Texas by investing in innovation, and whose support was key to today’s announcement, my friend, Lt. Governor David Dewhurst.