

September 5, 2000

Dear Parents,

The Department of Justice and Information Technology Association of American Foundation initiated the Cybercitizen Partnership because we recognize that while technology offers our society great benefits, it also creates great challenges that can only be addressed if we all work together.

A decade ago "cybercrime" and "cyberterrorism" didn't really exist outside of Hollywood movies; today they are very real threats. At the same time, we have raised a generation of new computer users, whose ability to utilize powerful technology is not necessarily matched by their understanding of the responsibilities that come with such power.

We cannot allow cyberspace to become the Wild West of the information age. But if we are to ensure public safety and responsible computer use, then government, industry and the public must all work together.

Young people are growing up in a society where the Internet is central to everything from commerce to recreation. Unfortunately, criminal activity exists online just as it does on the streets. While most children know that it is wrong to break into their neighbor's house or read their best friend's diary, fewer realize that it's wrong to break into their neighbor's computer and snoop through their computer files. As children learn basic rules about right and wrong in the off-line world, they must also learn about acceptable behavior on the Internet. We need kids to understand that hacking is the same as breaking and entering--that being a hacker doesn't make them "cool" or show their smarts--it makes them a criminal!

By fostering cyberethics and promoting responsible computer use, we can better ensure the privacy and security of all Americans.

Sincerely,

Janet Reno