

COMPUTER SYSTEM SECURITY AND PRIVACY ADVISORY BOARD

Established by the Computer Security Act of 1987

December 14, 2001

The Honorable Donald L. Evans
Secretary of Commerce
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Computer Security and Privacy Advisory Board is a Federal advisory committee established by the Computer Security Act of 1987. The law directs the Board to identify emerging managerial, technical, administrative and physical safeguard issues relative to computer systems security and privacy. The Board is then to advise, among others, the Secretary of Commerce and to report its findings to the Secretary of Commerce, the Office of Management and Budget, the Director of the National Security Agency, and the appropriate committees of the Congress.

As part of the Board's review of the computer security implications of the tragedy of September 11, it has come to our attention that a project we believe to be in the best interests of the nation is stalled. The Board is referring to the initiative of the National Security Council (NSC) and the Partnership for Critical Infrastructure Security (PCIS) to educate home users and small business owners on computer security measures. The Board is convinced that such an awareness and education program is the cornerstone for raising the security standard of home and small business Internet users. Such a program is critical to improving national cyber security.

The magnitude of the risk associated with a low security baseline in the home and small business Internet community should not be underestimated. For example, consumers and small business users are primary targets as unwilling participants in Distributed Denial of Service attacks such as those that disrupted Amazon.com and Ebay in early 2000. Imagine the impact on our population not only if cellular, telephone, power, and transportation services were disrupted, but also if our core Internet services were affected. Of growing concern is an International Data Corporation (IDC) prediction that by 2006 there will be 20 million on-line broadband users who could easily be targeted maliciously.

Given our increasing dependence on information technology, there seems little question that a serious cyber attack will occur in the future. We have already experienced an attack against our physical infrastructure and seen the initial dramatic fallout from that event. Cyber terrorism may well be next. Unfortunately, home and small business users are largely uneducated regarding the risks they face and the protection choices available to them. Failing to take even the simplest steps to protect systems (such as

installing anti-virus software and keeping it current) not only places these individuals and small businesses at risk, but it also jeopardizes everyone on the Internet, including the federal government. In the Board's view, government needs to take a leadership role in educating home and small business Internet users to protect themselves and our country from such risks.

It is our understanding that the proposed NSC program has broad commitment, including direct financial support and resources from the technology industry and the media. Although the community support for this initiative is high, the government has not, to date, provided the modest resources required to jump-start this initiative. We urgently request that you support this project as a high priority.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Franklin S. Reeder". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Franklin" written in a stylized, connected script.

Franklin S. Reeder
Chairman

