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**Letter-to-the-Editor
By Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn**

(309 words; electronic version available)

Laptop computers – the textbooks of the 21st century

Dear Editor,

Last week the Illinois House of Representatives took a historic step in passing the I-Connect Initiative (HB 5244), which will provide approximately 13,000 public school seventh graders and their teachers with laptop computers. Laptops will be the textbooks of the 21st century.

The I-Connect Initiative is a pilot program designed to give our students access to new technology, more information, and world-class employment opportunities. This landmark educational initiative will provide Illinois students with the skills needed for the 21st century.

Each participating school will receive laptops for every seventh-grade student and classroom teacher. All laptops will be equipped with science and math tutorials, word processing, note taking, spreadsheet software, and a warranty. In addition, educators will benefit from professional development training and schools will receive technical assistance to aid in developing a school-based laptop network.

The Illinois I-Connect program is based on similar – and widely successful – initiatives throughout the country. Henrico County in Virginia is enjoying its highest ever-recorded math and verbal SAT scores only four years after providing laptops for students. In fact, a recent Endeavor Research Group study of New Hampshire students found that regular use of laptops improved SAT scores by an average of 92 points.

But it's not just standardized test scores that will rise. Writing test scores are up in Maine since that state implemented its own laptop initiative. Educators in Maine report that students developed a sense of personal ownership of their laptops and – of the 38,000 computers issued – only 51 were lost, damaged or stolen.

Laptop computers have transformed learning in other states. Let's place this innovative resource in the hands of students across the state of Illinois.

The Illinois I-Connect Initiative is now before the members of the Illinois Senate. Please contact your state Senator and urge them to support the I-Connect Initiative. For more information please visit: www.IllinoisConnect.org.

Sincerely,

Pat Quinn
Illinois Lieutenant Governor