

Blacks, senior citizens face Internet problems

By John Kennedy
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - While the number of African-Americans who frequent the Internet continues to grow, White Web users maintain a good lead amidst the so-called digital divide, according to a recent Pew Internet and American Life Project study.

What was once the "digital divide" has evolved into the "digital dimmer switch," says Pew associate director Susannah Fox, referring to various degrees of Internet access and differences between population segments.

"I, technically, don't even use that term [digital divide] because that almost sounds like there's an on/off switch and that's less the case than it was years ago."

The divide is still significant, but increasing between African-Americans and Whites.

The survey, released five months ago, reveals that 58 percent of African-American adults use the Internet as opposed to 72 percent of Whites and 69 percent of English-speaking Hispanics.

Pew's March 2000 poll indicated that 35 percent of African-American adults used the Internet compared to 48 percent of Whites. This shows a seven-year increase of 66 percent for Blacks and 50 percent for Whites.

The issue of the digital divide is crucial because Internet access is becoming increasingly essential for everyday needs, such as the

search for employment opportunities.

"Many companies now no longer rely on or even use paper application forms," said Barbara Crawford, director of the AT&T-National Urban League Digital Career Academies. "When potential employees go to fill out an application, they have to fill it out online."

Educationally, the lack of Internet access puts students at all levels at a disadvantage for assignments or distance learning programs.

"People are acquiring certifications and degrees via the Internet," said Crawford. "It's a major vehicle for doing research."

Those with access to that infinite volume of information are often able to use it to well-informed decisions, including in competitive situations.

"Internet users feel they can go online and get just-in-time, customizable information about important questions in their lives," said Fox. "Someone who is not online does not have access to that information."

While some of this online information may concern perceptually trivial issues such as minor purchases, there are vital resources that can only be reached on the Web.

"There are now many more government services online than there ever were before," Fox said. "So those who are offline are not able to access that information or those services [as easily]."

Populations of people older than age 55 can be greatly disadvantaged by this inability to reach certain government services, many of which are related to healthcare, social security benefits and retirement.

A 2004 Pew study, Older Americans and the Internet, revealed that while 58 percent of Whites ages 55 to 64 are online, only 22 percent of African-Americans are logging on. Meanwhile, 11 percent of African-Americans over age 65 were on the Web as opposed to 22 percent of White seniors.

As the inequalities of the "digital dimmer switch," persist, there are people working to close the gap. The National Urban League has several programs for both youth and adults to increase familiarity with computers and the Internet.

Through a grant from AT&T, the Urban League operates 16 Digital Career Academies. The academies for adults focus on training in computer operations and information technology. After-school programs for the youth include a course on Internet radio programming for those interested in engineering or journalism, and another on video game creation.

"The purpose is to enlighten our young people on some of the careers that are available in this technological area," Crawford said. "We hope that it serves as an

(See Internet, Page 4)

Vote rights march set

Special to
Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - U.S. Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D), envisioning a growing national movement for Washington, D.C., voting rights, hopes an April 16 march and rally will educate Americans on the significance of the issue of

"The framers (founding fathers) didn't want the District to be a part of any state because they didn't want any state to have control over the District."

—Eleanor Holmes Norton
D.C. Congresswoman



"taxation without representation" enough to push through a new bill introduced on the House floor two weeks ago.

"This is really a 200-year-old injustice that is very late in correction," Norton tells the NNPA News Service. "The framers (founding fathers) didn't want the District to be a part of any state because they didn't want any state to have control over the District. That's not what we're asking. We're asking for the residents of the District of Columbia, who pay taxes and go to war, to have a vote in the national legislature. And we are the only legislature in the world that denies a vote to their own capitol."

Although major civil rights organizations, including the League of Women Voters, Common Cause, and Leadership Conference on Civil Rights — all with national networks and coalitions — have supported voting rights for the Districts, the issue has always met with major resis-

tance in Congress, which many have said is because the population is 57 percent Black and 38 percent White.

The current bill, H.R. 1433, has passed the Judiciary Committee and was on the House Floor for discussion this week. Mel Watt (D-N.C.) a member of Judiciary, led by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), has predicted the bill would pass the House, but he was skeptical about the Senate.

The March will begin Monday at Freedom Plaza at 2:30 p.m. and culminate at the U.S. Capitol. D.C. Mayor Adrian M. Fenty, Council Chairman Vincent Gray and Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton will be speaking at the plaza before the march.

"What has been most frustrating is that a poll shows that more than 80 percent of the American people believe that residents of the District of Columbia should have voting rights," said Norton. "But, 70 percent of Americans think that we already have them."

Follow the Rainbow to...

Good Health!



When your family counts on you to stay healthy, you can count on Rainbow Medical Centers' board certified family physicians to provide the highest quality of primary and urgent care services. Our facilities offer lab, x-ray, and are open evenings and weekends for your convenience. Rainbow Medical Centers has also been awarded Joint Commission Accreditation (JCAHO) for maintaining national standards of quality healthcare.

Track your health at
My Health Zone
You'll find it at...
www.rainbowmedical.com

RAINBOW
Medical Centers

PRIMARY & URGENT CARE



Board Certified Physicians
Most Insurances Accepted

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| West
255-6657
1341 S. Rainbow Blvd. | East
438-4003
821 N. Nellis Blvd. | North
655-0550
4920 Lone Mtn. Rd. | Rampart
254-9192
8522 Del Webb Blvd. | Galleria
436-5800
1397 Galleria Dr. | Golden Triangle
657-9555
1302 W. Craig Rd. | Boulder Hwy
898-1405
4241 S. Nellis Blvd. |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|



LAID TO REST

Doris Robinson prepares to place a football in the casket of her husband Eddie Robinson, former football coach of Grambling State University, with the help of former coach Doug Williams, during a ceremony to honor Robinson at the Louisiana Capitol in Baton Rouge, La., on Monday. He was one of football's winningest coaches.