

Hillary Bangs the Innovation Drum, Quotes Colbert

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Hillary Rodham Clinton on Wednesday outlined a national broadband policy and called for a permanent implementation of the research and development credit.

The New York senator and Democratic presidential front-runner made her remarks in Merrimack, New Hampshire, where she is campaigning. Her so-called "Innovation Agenda," is part of her economic policy platform that she's publicizing on her "Middle Class Express" tour.

The *Associated Press* [quoted](#) Clinton today noting that: "The nation that invented the Internet is now ranked about 25th in access to it."

Though short on details, Clinton's broadband policy as announced in a statement would create tax incentives to encourage build-out to "underserved areas." She also said that she would "support" state and local broadband initiatives

Clinton pointed to an initiative called [ConnectKentucky](#) as an example of a successful public private partnership. She said that the partnership had stimulated significant investment and had expanded the coverage rate to more than 90%. [It didn't [cover](#) Columbus, Kentucky, though.]

Intriguingly, the Wednesday announcement did include this one crucial, yet inside-baseball kind of detail:

"And she will change the FCC rules so that we finally have an accurate, detailed picture of broadband deployment and penetration rates."

The Bush Administration was sued earlier this year by the investigative journalism outfit the [Center for Public Integrity](#) for withholding the information from the public. A federal district court judge in DC in late August [ruled](#) in favor of the Administration.

Clinton last week [unveiled](#) her science policy, which was well-received in the scientific community. She used the occasion to continue her criticisms of the [deeply unpopular](#) Bush Administration, saying that she would end the "war on science." The term is an allusion the title of the *New York Times* [bestseller](#) by Chris Mooney.

She used the same approach on Wednesday, saying that "Americans are concerned about the global economy -- and the policies of this administration have only made matters worse."

While many pundits have bemoaned the United States' deregulatory broadband policies over the past eight years and its lagging connectivity in world rankings, President Bush has in previous State of the Union speeches called for making the R&D tax credit permanent.

The R&D tax credit issue is a particularly timely one because it's scheduled to expire at the end of this year.

It's an issue on the [radar](#) of the politically powerful trade group the National Association of Manufacturers, as well as other [coalitions](#) and technology industry trade [groups](#) such as the Information Technology Industry Council, which represents companies like AMD, Apple, Cisco, Dell, eBay, Intel and Microsoft on Capitol Hill. Both groups say that the tax credit helps to make the US competitive, and have pushed to make the credit permanent. The idea was first enacted in 1981 and is an annual issue up for debate in Congress. Other countries also offer similar policies to lure investment.

Clinton's overall innovation agenda closely tracks ITIC's 2007 "High Tech Priorities" lobbying [agenda](#), although her Wednesday statement stayed silent on the issue of immigration.

Member companies of the lobbying association want Congress to expand the number of H-1B visas to allow more foreign engineers to come and work for them in the United States. (Microsoft Founder Bill Gates has historically been a particularly vocal critic of US caps on the number of H-1B visas it issues, characterizing the policy as one of: "We don't want smart people -- keep them out.")

For her part, Clinton on Wednesday pushed the idea of closing the skills gap by making college more affordable, and by introducing incentives to bring more women and minorities into the fields of math, science and engineering.

The *AP* also reported this Clinton wise-crack, attributed to Stephen Colbert, the famed fake news anchor on Comedy Central.

"To paraphrase Stephen Colbert, that great philosopher, this administration doesn't make decisions based on facts, it makes facts based on decisions," Clinton said to laughter. "By ignoring or manipulating science the Bush administration is letting our economic competitors get an edge in the global economy."

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