

July 17, 2001

MEMORANDUM TO: Chairman Meserve  
Commissioner Dicus  
Commissioner McGaffigan  
Commissioner Merrifield

FROM: Dennis K. Rathburn, Director **/RA/**  
Office of Congressional Affairs

SUBJECT: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM HEARING,  
"FEDERAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MODERNIZATION;  
ASSESSING COMPLIANCE WITH THE GOVERNMENT  
PAPERWORK ELIMINATION ACT," 6/21/01

On June 21, 2001, the House Government Reform Committee held a hearing to assess the adequacy of Federal agencies' efforts to comply with the 1998 Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA). In October of 2000, Federal agencies submitted strategic plans to the Office of Management and Budget detailing how they intended to comply with the GPEA and what their anticipated schedules would be for allowing electronic filing of government forms. The Office of Management and Budget Director, Mitch Daniels, gave testimony summarizing the progress of different agencies, as well as his personal concerns and expectations regarding agency compliance with the GPEA. In addition to Mr. Daniels, the Committee heard from private industry representatives in the information technology field, as well as representatives from a few Federal agencies. The hearing demonstrated the Administration's interest in achieving a more "citizen-centered" government and continuing commitment to e-government initiatives.

Chairman Burton (R-IN) opened the hearing by stating that Federal agencies should not only comply with the GPEA, but also go beyond its mandates in order to make the government more efficient and accessible to the public. In his opinion, one way to achieve this would be for agencies to make strategic information technology investments. He also stated that the government needs to operate more like a private business and utilize the newest technology to increase productivity and decrease costs to U.S. citizens.

Mr. Daniels of OMB gave testimony on how different agencies were progressing with GPEA compliance. The Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of the Treasury, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development were all cited by Mr. Daniels as agencies that had submitted exemplary strategic plans. The enterprise resource planning system instituted by the U.S. Mint was referenced by OMB as an example of a governmental "best practice," which can and should be followed by other agencies. The Departments of Defense, Justice, and Health and Human Services were cited by Mr. Daniels as examples of agencies whose

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strategic plans indicated they would not be in compliance with the deadlines set by the GPEA. Mr. Daniels outlined several areas of concern that he hoped the Committee would take into consideration in future legislation and program oversight. These areas centered around OMB's desire to see agencies formulate information technology systems that are both inter- and intra-agency compatible. Mr. Daniels expressed fear that if this goal is not made a priority at the current formulation stage, a great deal of money will be spent to "make a bad situation worse." Mr. Daniels indicated that OMB would be focusing on achieving GPEA compliance by those agencies that had the most interaction with the public. It also appears that OMB will be using electronic accessibility of agency forms as one way to gauge Federal agencies' compliance with the GPEA. According to Mr. Daniels, there are approximately 6,000 Federal agency transactions that are eligible for web accessibility, but that less than half of those would actually be electronically available by the 2003 deadline. Mr. Daniels stated that these numbers are unacceptable to both OMB and the Bush Administration.

The next panel to give testimony consisted of Sue Bostrom from Cisco Systems and Curt Kolcun from Microsoft. Ms. Bostrom spoke about different factors that have led her company to be successful in implementing information technology programs in the private sector. These factors include "strong, visible, top-down leadership" and "accountability." In answer to a request from the Committee for suggestions on how the government might succeed in this area, Ms. Bostrom stated that agencies need to choose three or four small areas to improve upon in the short term, rather than getting lost looking at the long-term big picture. Mr. Kolcun spoke about the information technology system his company established for the government of the United Kingdom. He stated that this is a good example for the United States to follow, and urged Federal agencies to purchase software that utilizes extensible markup language (XML, a new, simpler, Web markup language that allows users to tailor the language to particular kinds of documents and yet speed exchange of documents among otherwise incompatible computer systems) technology. Chairman Burton encouraged both Ms. Bostrom and Mr. Kolcun to submit any further suggestions they might have to either the Committee or Mr. Daniels.

The final panel consisted of representatives from the General Accounting Office, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Treasury, and the U.S. Mint. These speakers briefed the Committee on their efforts to institute and utilize information technology programs in each of their respective agencies.

The witness list is attached; testimony is available in OCA.

Attachment: As stated

cc:	SECY	OGC	NRR
	OGC/Cyr	EDO	OCAA
	NMSS	RES	OIP
	OPA	CFO	CIO
			OIG