

**Statement of M.J. Jameson**  
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**U.S. General Services Administration**

Good Afternoon, Chairman Putnam, Vice-Chairman Miller, and members of the subcommittee. I am M.J. Jameson, Associate Administrator for the General Services Administration's (GSA's) Office of Citizen Services and Communications. Thank you for inviting me to testify at today's hearing on: "Electronic Government: A Progress Report on the Successes and Challenges of Government-wide Information Technology Solutions."

I am here to discuss USA Services, the E-Government initiative assigned to GSA's Office of Citizen Services and Communications. I would like to say at the outset that we appreciate the strong support this subcommittee and full Committee Chairman Tom Davis have shown for USA Services. It is also important to acknowledge the encouragement and guidance we have received from the Office of Management and Budget and our own Administrator of General Services, Stephen A. Perry.

**Background**

President Bush articulated his plan to harness Internet technology on behalf of citizens in his February 2002 budget request to Congress. The idea of using Internet technology to make government more citizen centric has been fully embraced by Administrator Perry. This concept is part of the President's Management Agenda, an aggressive government reform strategy designed by the Administration. In his Management Agenda, the President promised to use the Internet "to empower citizens, allowing them to request customized information from Washington when they need it, not just when Washington wants

to give it to them. True reform involves not just giving people information, but giving citizens the freedom to act upon it.”

The broad objective was – and remains – championing citizen-centered government that will result in major improvements in the Federal Government’s value to the citizen. USA Services is helping to make this a reality by supporting many objectives of the President’s program to strengthen E-Government.

### **The Mission**

The mission of USA Services is to present citizens with a single “front door” to government, allowing them to receive accurate, timely, and consistent answers and information. USA Services also helps other E-Gov initiatives and Federal agencies better respond to citizen inquiries.

USA Services is managed by the GSA Office of Citizen Services and Communications, established in June 2002 to streamline and modernize access to government information and services. USA Services was built from the following operational units that now reside within OCSC: FirstGov.gov, the National Contact Center (better known as 1-800-FED-INFO), and the Pueblo, Colorado, publication distribution facility. This structure allows citizens to access government more efficiently, effectively, and more easily than ever before. It also permits entry through the citizen’s channel of choice: the Internet, telephone, e-mail, or publications. With USA Services, we are answering the President’s challenge to help citizens find information and obtain services organized *according to their needs, and not according to the divisions created by the government’s organizational chart.*

Citizens in search of information can log on to FirstGov.gov, where they are linked to and able to search more than 24 million Federal and state government pages that offer easy-to-understand information and services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This year, we expect to top 190 million page views.

With FirstGov.gov, we also have the capacity to help those who need assistance with difficult questions. For example, citizens can send us an E-mail by clicking on an Uncle Sam icon, and we respond within two business days. This year we project that we will respond to more than 150,000 emails, which is more than twice the amount received last year.

We also serve citizens through more traditional means, such as **1-800-FED-INFO**, the National Contact Center, where we answer telephone questions from citizens on behalf of all Federal agencies. During FY03, citizens called 1-800-FED-INFO nearly two million times. This fiscal year, we anticipate more than 2.5 million calls. We answer questions such as, “How do I get a passport?” And, “Where can I apply for Federal grants and benefits?” And, “How do I apply for a Federal job?”

The third communications channel is the **Publications Center**. “Pueblo, Colorado 81009” is one of the best known addresses in the country. Pueblo is a one-stop shopping center for Federal consumer publications. Whether citizens order publications by mail, phone, or on-line, their orders are filled at the Pueblo distribution facility. Since the beginning of the print program in the early 1970s, we have distributed over 336 million publications to citizens. Three of the most popular publications are: Making a Will; Losing Weight; and the Consumer Action Handbook.

## **USA Services – Assisting Federal Agencies**

Mr. Chairman, the USA Services initiative also supports the President's directive to ignite a culture change in government – one that shifts the focus away from agency needs and more toward citizen needs.

As the lead in this effort, GSA is looking after citizen interests by helping our fellow agencies in two ways: First, when an agency gets a phone call or E-mail that should go to another agency, we take care of the misdirected communication.

Citizens often don't know which agency to call or E-mail with their questions or problems. When they reach the wrong agency, we can either give them the information, or – if the question is more complex – direct them to the right office.

USA Services currently has 14 agencies signed up to send us these misdirected calls and E-mails. Our goal is 20 partners by the end of FY 2004. Ultimately, we would like to have the entire government on board. This is a free service for the agencies, as it is a part of OCSC's core mission to help Federal agencies better serve the public.

In some cases, agencies come to us for an even higher level of support. USA Services personnel can respond to citizens' frequently asked questions with information that's been cleared through agency experts. We call this our Tier 1 service. This not only helps the citizen, it helps the agencies as well by saving time and money, and by allowing agency personnel to concentrate on *their* core

missions. This is a reimbursable service that we provide to six agencies. Our goal is 10 Tier One partners by the end of FY 2004 and 15 by the end of FY 2005.

### **FirstGov.Gov – The Flagship**

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to say a bit more about FirstGov.gov, the cornerstone of USA Services. In the simplest terms, FirstGov has taught us that it makes a lot more sense to go online than to waste time standing in line when working with government. It swaps red tape for a red carpet.

FirstGov helps citizens navigate through the bureaucracy without having to know organizational structure, program names or the acronyms of government agencies. It provides citizens, businesses, Federal employees, government organizations and the media with an easy, one-stop place to find government services and information.

In the past, citizen interaction with Federal agencies and state and local governments could be hit-or-miss. A mail or phone inquiry might mean the letter writer or the phone caller would be passed from office to office. There was no guarantee that the citizen's question would be answered, a frustrating and time-consuming exercise for all. With FirstGov that is no longer the case.

Mr. Chairman, reaction to FirstGov shows citizens appreciate being able to access government on their terms. A partial list of accomplishments includes the following:

- Innovations in American Government Award, the "Oscar" of government, given by the Ford Foundation and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in

partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government -- May 2003.

- Featured as a model for collaboration in “New Models of Collaboration: A Guide for Managers,” a study conducted by the Center for Technology in Government, State University of New York at Albany -- February 2004.
- Selected among EContent 100 by E-Content Magazine – December 2003.
- Rated #1 in Web-Quality & E-Government Readiness in the United Nations "World Public Sector Report 2003 - E-Government at the Crossroads" -- November 2003.
- Rated #1 in Overall Federal e-Government by the Taubman Center for Public Policy at Brown University -- September 2003.
- PC Magazines Top 100 Classic Sites – March 2003.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, President George W. Bush has challenged us with an aggressive reform agenda and we at GSA are working to implement programs that will keep us moving forward. USA Services and FirstGov.gov are critical to our efforts.

The Office of Management and Budget has been instrumental in the progress we've achieved so far. This year OMB also directed agencies in the FY05 Passback language and guidance to sign USA Services Working Agreements for our misdirect program and to evaluate our Tier 1 services for citizen inquiries.

I know that I speak for Administrator Perry as well as myself when I say the bottom line is two-fold: the demand for citizen services is headed up, and we in government are actively and aggressively taking advantage of the technology at our disposal. A dramatic change is underway, one that scientists, sociologists and historians may not fully appreciate for decades to come.

I am proud to be part of that change, and again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.