

Congresswoman Candice S. Miller

Opening Statement

Committee on Government Reform

Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations, and the Census

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to serve as vice-chair of this subcommittee with you, and I look forward to working on this subcommittee throughout this Congress.

This hearing on the implementation of the E-Government Act will be a great opportunity for this subcommittee, and the Government Reform Committee as a whole, to establish important benchmarks to measure the Federal Government's progress in updating and streamlining information technology initiatives. In order to be successful, we need to understand what progress has taken place since the E-Government Act was enacted last year, what stage of implementation the Federal Government is currently at, and what needs to be accomplished from this point forward.

As a new member of Congress, I hope to bring a unique perspective to this subcommittee in regarding E-Government. As Michigan's former Secretary of State, I had the privilege of leading a number of efforts to integrate information technology to improve the services offered to our State's residents. The focus of my agency was on customer service; and as the department responsible for motor vehicle registration, average wait times in our offices decreased from over 2 hours to only 15 minutes. A large portion of this improvement was the result of IT implementation at the government-to-customer level. In Michigan, a person can now renew his or her driver's license and license plate over the internet or touch-tone phone. But improved government-to-customer practices are not the only reason services were improved. My office had enacted a statewide technology initiative that improved efficiency within the department and among different state agencies.

When I took office as Michigan Secretary of State in 1995, there was not a single fax machine or copy machine in any of our 180 branch offices. In eight years, the Michigan Department of State was transformed from a very antiquated government agency to the first state agency of its kind employ E-Government. Many of the same challenges that we faced at the state level will be prevalent at the federal level as well.

As we take actions that make government more efficient and cost effective by using technology and expanding databases, I would urge us to remain ever-mindful of the privacy protections that we must always provide citizens. I understand we will be looking at those issues more closely this year in future hearings. In addition, as a subcommittee that also has an intergovernmental relations oversight responsibility, I would urge my colleagues to join me in strongly encouraging our federal agencies and departments to work closely with our state and local governments where appropriate on these E-Government initiatives.

As we listen to the testimony of the witnesses here before us, I am encouraged to see where our government is and the direction we will be heading as we integrate information technology. I extend my personal appreciation to our witnesses, who I know all desire the smoothest possible implementation. Together, we have a great opportunity to reduce costs and improve government efficiency and effectiveness.