

Congresswoman Candice S. Miller

Opening Statement

Committee on Government Reform

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

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OPENING STATEMENT

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing today. I appreciate your desire to examine ways to improve the business of the Federal government. The work that you do as Chairman is highly laudable, and I am pleased to work with you as vice chair of this Subcommittee.

The task facing the Federal government in regards to electronic records management is complex and extremely daunting. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) possesses the responsibility to provide guidance and oversight to Federal agencies regarding their records management strategies. Under current law, Federal agencies are required to submit record schedules to NARA, which must be approved and, in turn, allow NARA to aid agencies in their records management strategy implementation. However as with so many other statutory requirements concerning the modernization and improved efficiency of government, many Federal agencies are not cooperating. NARA has been working for years on developing an effective electronic records management policy, but the responsibility of implementing this strategy falls directly on each individual agency.

Today, we will examine the strategy that NARA has developed and the progress that has been made. I feel it important to also examine the successes and failures of Federal agencies in regards to this enormous endeavor. Though each agency is responsible for its own success, the valuable lessons learned throughout government at all levels must be utilized as an important resource. For this reason, I am pleased that we will hear from witnesses from both the Federal and state levels of government and from the representatives of the private sector.

As the Federal government progresses into the 21st century and moves to modernize its operation, a problem has arisen in that Federal agencies seem to place differing priorities on the utilization of technology. Some agencies have seen the benefits of implementing substantial

technological, while others seem to be stuck in the past. Something needs to be done to force these particular agencies to realize the importance of modernization. The current scenario is simply more than an adjustment in the current frame of thinking, it also includes agencies not complying by federally mandated statutes. Currently, there is no substantive enforcement mechanism that forces agencies to abide by statutes outlined in the Federal Records Act and to submit schedules required by NARA. Many Federal agencies have not placed any degree of priority on electronic records management, and this has resulted in a wide variety of problems.

Linda Koontz, in her written testimony, states that NARA has developed a strategy for raising awareness among agency management of the need to place electronic records management at a high priority. This is very encouraging, and I look forward to Mr. Carlin's testimony. I hope that he can elaborate on the measures taken by NARA within the last year to engrain upon agency officials the need to implement an effective management strategy.

I especially want to thank Caryn Wojcik for taking the time to testify before the Subcommittee today. During my tenure as Michigan's Secretary of State, the State Archives division was under the direction of my office. Because of the great people that led our state's archiving and records management projects, Michigan has become a national leader by incorporating information technology into the everyday activities of the government. In addition, state managers are working hard to ensure that the state is prepared as technology evolves well into the 21st century.

I am hoping that Ms. Wojcik will inform the Subcommittee as to the details of the projects the state of Michigan has undertaken and the lessons they have learned. Federal agencies must utilize the knowledge acquired by state governments so that we are not re-inventing the wheel. Though electronic records management at the Federal level is a daunting task, there are resources available that will enrich the process. I reiterate my point that these Federal agencies must make a wholehearted effort to implement a successful management policy. As Federal records sit untouched and the technology used to create these records become obsolete, it is imperative that action be taken and agencies prepare for the future.

The number of issues facing government at all levels are immense and challenging, and it is important that Congress play an active role in ensuring that electronic records management be implemented effectively and in a timely manner. I look forward to the testimony of all the witnesses today. Thank you each for coming.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.