

Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Mel Bryson. Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today in my capacity as head of the Office of Information Technology of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts. My position is the equivalent of the Chief Information Officer for the federal court system. The Administrative Office provides and manages national voice and data services to more than 750 courthouses and offices throughout the country, including the 50 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and the Mariana Islands. Over 30,000 judiciary employees use these telecommunications services on a daily basis. A far greater number of people in the legal community, members of the bar, and the public rely upon the judiciary's expansive telephone systems and our Internet gateways to contact our employees and public access information systems.

Importance of the FTS Contract

The Federal Technology Service contract series has been an essential tool in providing the United States courts with a comprehensive set of integrated, cost-effective and highly reliable voice and data services for more than a decade. We at the Administrative Office are committed to working with the General Services Administration (GSA) and its FTS office and our

counterpart agency representatives in the executive branch to develop a successful follow-on solution for our wide-ranging and ever-growing needs for telecommunication services. In late January, the Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, Leonidas Ralph Mecham, replied to a request from Chairman Davis for information to assist in the Committee's oversight of the next generation Networx acquisition program. A copy of Director Mecham's response is attached to this statement.

The judiciary's experience with the FTS contract series has shown us that such a contract vehicle offers clear advantages in terms of prices as well as significant reductions in overhead for contract management. The FTS contracts also greatly facilitate our engineering tasks by reducing the need to coordinate infrastructure changes with but one vendor team that knows the judiciary's needs and is a willing partner in providing enhanced products and services.

What we have learned from the transition to FTS2001

The federal judiciary was the first major FTS customer to complete the transition from FTS2000 to the follow-on FTS2001 contract. The judiciary's orderly transition was facilitated by our own internal and accurate inventory of the courts' national voice and data services. Our independent inventory

streamlined the complex processes of preparing, submitting, tracking and verifying tens of thousands of separate orders for lines, individual phone calling cards, and other specialized telecommunication services as we made this complicated transition.

Our transition experience demonstrates the importance of accurate and integrated management systems. Unfortunately, consolidation of telecommunications vendors over the past few years has not been accompanied by a smooth integration of their separate legacy systems for processing orders, managing circuits and changes, and ensuring billing systems are automatically updated. In numerous cases, our ability to quickly and efficiently change, add or delete services has been hampered by these inefficient vendor tracking systems and by overly complex and poorly integrated vendor ordering and billing systems. These problems are exacerbated when services are shifted from one vendor to another. For us, change of service is a critical issue in terms of the pain that can be felt by the courts and our technical staffs overseeing the changes and by our customers dealing with the interruptions each time a move is attempted. **The costs and efforts of changing to the new contract and possibly to a new vendor or vendors during the future FTS2001 to Networx transition will challenge all of us. If the transition involves the need to move to multiple new contracts and**

forces us to make the change to new vendors, the effort will be much more complex and difficult. Ultimately this will take longer and involve much higher indirect costs to each agency, further straining us during a period of budget austerity.

Telecommunications services available today at steeply discounted prices via FTS2001 may not be matched by Networx and related contracts due to the changes in the industry and the costs of providing the services. Since agency budgets will undoubtedly remain constrained for the next several years, ensuring the best quality services at the lowest price will continue to be of prime importance to all of us. We also need the flexibility to add new services in order to support opportunities for savings in staffing and workflow that are dependent on telecommunications advances.

The Judiciary's Commitment to Networx

The Administrative Office has made a significant investment in the process of developing the follow-on contract to FTS2001. My staff is assisting the GSA FTS office, together with other members of the Inter-agency Management Group. We are participating on several working groups to help define the Networx proposal. We are using our experiences to develop practical solutions for the challenges we have faced with each of the previous

FTS contracts. We are also working to ensure that Networx incorporates the newest telecommunications products and services based on modern technology enhancements, coupled with the flexibility to add new services and functional capabilities over the life of Networx. We are committed to making Networx a success as it replaces the expiring FTS2001 and related contracts such as the Metropolitan Area Acquisition vehicles, or MAAs.

What We Need from Networx

We have defined key requirements needed to address the Judiciary's telecommunications needs. They include:

- continuous, high quality service;**
- integrated end-to-end processes to order, install, inventory and bill services;**
- flexibility to provide both local and long distance voice and data services; and,**
- flexibility in choosing central and local billing and management options.**

The judiciary prefers a single Networx contract that covers the full range of telecommunications solutions. This approach avoids the additional costs associated with the need to research, compete, award, and manage

multiple contracts for the myriad parts of our nationwide network infrastructure. The Administrative Office also strongly prefers a long-term, non-mandatory solution to assure the best possible pricing for all services. In short, we need to ensure that an efficient and effective vehicle for continued service to the courts is available to replace the expiring FTS2001.

Conclusion

On behalf of Director Meham of the Administrative Office, I thank you for the opportunity to describe our interest in the Networx acquisition program and the important role its predecessors have played in providing high levels of telecommunications services to the courts and the public. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have regarding the federal courts' telecommunications needs.