

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM**  
**TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN**



**MEDIA ADVISORY**

For Immediate Release  
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*What's the Hold Up?*

**Government Reform Committee to Examine**  
**Telecommuting within Federal Workforce**

*Yesterday's "Win-Win" Human Capital Tool is*  
*Today's Homeland Security "Must"*

**What: Government Reform Committee oversight hearing:**  
**"Beneficial or Critical? The Heightened Need for Telework Opportunities In the Post-9/11 World"**

**When: THURSDAY, JULY 8, 2004, 10:15 A.M.**

**Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING**

**Background:**

Telecommuting, the use of technology to work from home or other locations instead of a central office, has emerged as an essential management tool for the federal government. Benefits of telework include reducing traffic congestion and pollution, improving employee recruitment and retention, increasing productivity, and reducing the need for office space. Allowing federal employees to telework has the potential to save U.S. taxpayers a substantial amount of money in real estate costs for the federal government.

In addition, telecommuting allows agencies and businesses to function through occurrences that can disrupt business as usual. Many Federal departments and agencies remain unprepared to operate in the event of a catastrophic event. Telecommuting allows agencies to function through natural or terrorist incidents that disrupt business or force an extended evacuation of buildings, as was the case with numerous government buildings following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the anthrax mailings in October 2001, and Hurricane Isabel during September 2003. **Despite the substantial benefits, the numbers of teleworkers in the Federal government are far below the legal requirements set by Congress four years ago.**

The hearing's focus will be based on the enactment of Section 359 of Public Law 106-346 (P.L. 106-346) in October 2000. This law requires each executive branch agency to establish a telework policy "under which eligible employees of the agency may participate in telecommuting to the maximum extent possible without diminished employee performance." The law also charges OPM to ensure that its requirements are applied to 25 percent of the Federal workforce by April 2001 and to an additional 25 percent of Federal employees during each subsequent fiscal year. Thus, by the end of this year, the law is to be applied to 100 percent of the Federal workforce.

**While OPM and GSA have attempted to educate agencies, train employees, and provide technical assistance, the Federal government continues to fall short of meeting the requirements of P.L. 106-346.** After conducting a survey of Federal agencies, OPM released a status report on telework within the Federal government that revealed only 102,921 employees telecommuted out of 751,844 employees (13.7 percent) deemed eligible to telecommute in April 2004, by which time the government was statutorily directed to be at 75 percent.

While the substantial benefits of telework may be clear to some, cultural hindrances appear to be the greatest barrier to maximum implementation of telework in the Federal government. Telework challenges accepted views about authority and accountability in office settings, and consequently many Federal managers seem slow to employ telework in their agencies. Practical questions undeniably exist about telework, such as the security of the tasks employees complete at home and the costs to provide technology to employees to allow them to telework. Many supervisors cling to the antiquated notion that if they cannot see their employees they must not be working. Essentially, telework shifts the balance of power; it affords employees more autonomy and responsibility. This can be unsettling, particularly to managers and even employees, who spent most of their careers in an industrial age workplace.

**The Committee intends to ascertain what more needs to be done by OPM, GSA, and the Congress to compel agencies to allow more employees to telework on a more frequent basis. At the same time, Members will consider the practicality of applying the directives in P.L. 106-346 government-wide.** The Committee will also hear from managers from outside the Federal government who are experienced in coordinating telework policies to determine what the government can learn from their approaches and expertise.

**Witnesses:**

Panel one:

**Kay Coles James**, Director, Office of Personnel Management  
**Stephen Perry**, Administrator, General Services Administration

Panel two:

**Pamela J. Gardiner**, Acting Inspector General for Tax Administration, Department of the Treasury

**Kathleen J.H. Wheeler**, Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer, Office of Policy, Management and Budget, Department of the Interior

**J. Christopher Mihm**, Director, Strategic Issues, General Accounting Office

Panel three:

**James A. Kane Ph.D.**, President & Chief Executive Officer, Software Productivity Consortium

**Steve DuMont**, Vice President, Internet Business Solutions Group, Cisco Systems, Inc.

**Eric Richert**, Vice President for iWork Solutions Group, Sun Microsystems

**Carol Goldberg**, Former Telework Program Manager, Fairfax County (VA) Government

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