

Congresswoman Candice S. Miller

Opening Statement

Committee on Government Reform

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

March 25, 2003

OPENING STATEMENT

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the witnesses that will testify before this subcommittee. I look forward to hearing what you have to say.

Twelve days ago, this subcommittee heard testimony regarding the implementation of the E-Government Act of 2002. One of the most important aspects of this implementation is the topic of today's hearing – data mining. Data mining is essentially the analysis of data to create a personal profile of a person.

I want to emphasize the importance of the confidence of citizens and of government in the use of data mining. Data mining will become an integral tool in our nation's security, but the confidence and privacy of the citizens of this country must not be compromised

As Michigan's Secretary of State, my office created the first comprehensive state-wide voter file, namely the qualified voter file.

With a database over 7 million voters, I had to make sure that our citizens were confident that this database was complete, up-to-date, and not used in a malicious manner. The voter file was an important endeavor because of its importance to the entire state government and the services our government offered.

With the voter file, I always kept in mind the confidence of our citizenry and concerns over personal privacy. I can proudly admit that the qualified voter file was noted in the Ford-Carter Commission on election reform, and my office had received the highest grade of any state by the N.A.A.C.P. for election reform after the 2000 election.

In his written testimony, Mr. Rosen had talked about striking an appropriate balance between privacy and security. Citizens are afraid that their privacy will be sacrificed and it must be the job of elected officials to prevent this.

When the State of Michigan began using state-of-the-art driver's licenses and identification cards, I was forced in the middle of a State debate about the information that was to be included on the magnetic strip used. We included only three pieces of information to ensure our citizens that the government was not collecting unnecessary personal information on them. The same guidelines should be used at the federal level whether we are discussing oversight of Defense Department purchase cards or our homeland security.

I look forward to working on this subcommittee to establish guidelines to retain the confidence of our citizens in regards to data mining. I hope that the witnesses testifying today will offer recommendations for proper government oversight to ensure that citizen confidence and privacy is not sacrificed, frivolous spending is reduced, and national security is enhanced.

Thank you.