

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION POLICY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL
RELATIONS AND THE CENSUS
CONGRESSMAN ADAM PUTNAM, CHAIRMAN



OVERSIGHT HEARING
STATEMENT BY ADAM PUTNAM, CHAIRMAN

Hearing topic: *"Federal Information Systems Integration and Consolidation: Maximizing Technology Investment Across Agency Boundaries."*

Tuesday, July 15, 2003
10:00 a.m.
Room 2154 Rayburn House Office Building

OPENING STATEMENT

Good morning and welcome to today's hearing on federal information systems integration and consolidation across agency boundaries.

This hearing is a continuation of the aggressive oversight by this Subcommittee to ensure that the federal government is taking full advantage of the efficiencies created through E-Government and improving the way the federal government manages its IT investments.

Let me just pause and make this point affirmatively. We are not just conducting oversight hearings for the sake of holding hearings. We expect results and will continue this work with that outcome as our mission!

Despite its distinction as the largest buyer of information technology in the world, the federal government has a tradition of purchasing and maintaining thousands of "stovepiped" systems that operate separately from other agencies and are not interoperable with other systems. Simply getting a handle on what systems exist and agreeing to a unified plan to coordinate this disparate IT environment is a monumental task.

One of the primary ways the federal government is improving its productivity and results from IT investments is by improving agency IT reporting mechanisms through the Office of Management and Budget. To secure funding for future IT purchases, agencies must now provide OMB with a "business case" that links new IT investment to performance improvement. Agency IT budget requests also must synchronize with the so-called Federal Enterprise Architecture (FEA) – the government-wide modernization "blueprint" of the government's future IT structure.

It is clear that the ongoing development of the federal enterprise architecture has proven to be a powerful tool for OMB to identify key gaps and redundant efforts, and is being used to determine the most effective investment of IT – not to mention help address our massive cybersecurity challenge. Agencies also must develop their own agency enterprise architectures describing exactly how that IT spending will transform and modernize around the needs of citizens.

In carrying out those duties and in preparing their budget submissions, agencies utilize an IT planning framework developed by the Federal CIO Council known as the “Business Reference Model” or “BRM”. The BRM describes the federal government’s “lines of business” independent of the agencies that actually perform those functions.

By describing the federal government around common functional “lines of business” across government instead of the traditional “stove-piped”, agency-by-agency viewpoint, the process forces agency collaboration to leverage technology (and technology purchases) across various agencies -- by function -- in order to eliminate redundant spending. By recognizing opportunities for integration and consolidation, OMB has -- in effect -- created a process that determines our next wave of cross-agency E-Government initiatives to join the list of 24 projects already being pursued.

The purpose of our hearing today is to examine the progress being made by the federal government to modernize agency information technology management around these so-called common “lines of business” that cross agency boundaries. Several common internal “lines of business” were identified during this year’s budget process deserving of immediate attention for potential consolidation.

They include integration and consolidation of systems in the following areas: financial management; human resources; monetary benefits; criminal investigations; data and statistics; and, public health monitoring.

In addition to reviewing the status of these identified areas, I would also be interested in the recommendations of our witnesses today on how this effort coincides with two other issues – cybersecurity and software procurement.

First, it seems clear that integrating and consolidating our IT around these business lines could concurrently provide an opportunity to better secure our IT systems in a far less expensive manner than patching up old systems and processes. Second, I am encouraged by the additional cost savings we might derive by connecting today’s topic to the large discounts I believe we can secure through economies of scale, such as through the recently-announced “SmartBuy” software licensing initiative.

It is becoming more evident every day that these various pieces of IT spending must be considered as a package. Sticking to an architecture and eliminating redundancies by looking across boundary lines is a process that concurrently addresses our cybersecurity challenges and fosters cost savings opportunities. Conversely, an IT framework based on unique solutions only further exacerbates our cybersecurity challenges and increases software costs.

The Subcommittee especially looks forward to hearing advice from some of our country’s leading software and integrator companies on making the federal government operate its common cross-agency systems more efficiently; lessons learned from their past clients pursuing enterprise-wide IT integration; and how to best derive taxpayer savings by more productively managing these major cross-agency investments.

Today's hearing can be viewed live via WebCast by going to <http://reform.house.gov> and then clicking on the link under “Live Committee Broadcast”.