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Statement of
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in Government
before the
Committee on Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and other members of the committee, for inviting me to participate in this important hearing on S.803, the E- Government Act of 2001. I congratulate you and this committee for your leadership in promoting e-government as a way of transforming government, both the way it operates and the way it connects with the people it serves.

This is not only about e-government. It is also about e-the people. The internet links people not only to one another and to e-commerce, but to the public marketplace of ideas, initiatives, innovation, transactions, and results.

At the Council for Excellence in Government, we think of our ambitious mission in terms of excellent performance and results, and also in terms of the American people's understanding, participation, and trust in government.

If you ask what has the greatest potential to improve the performance of government and connect it to people in a meaningful way, the answer is clearly electronic government.

The Council for Excellence in Government has assembled an E-government initiative in partnership with 350 leaders from government, business, civic groups, and the research community. Together, we developed a blueprint for E-government which we released in February.

Our report is called *Electronic Government: The Next American Revolution* because we believe strongly that the Internet has the potential not only to revolutionize the way government operates but also to put ownership of government

truly in the hands of all Americans. (Copies of the report have been made available to all committee members and can be viewed online at www.excelgov.org). According to a Hart/Teeter opinion poll sponsored by the Council for Excellence in Government, most Americans think in terms of *the* government, not *our* government and most Americans, especially young people, do not think of government as "of, by, and for the people."

For the next generation of leaders—who are the young people of today—the Internet is a part of their connective beings. Sixty percent of adults in the U.S. are on-line; 75% of 12-17 year olds are on-line.

Unfortunately, young people do not see much of a role for government in their pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. What for young Thomas Jefferson was a great experiment in representative democracy is for young people today boring and irrelevant—"whatever." They don't vote much. Only 17% of 18-24 year olds voted in the 1998 election (28% is the estimate for 2000), compared to 50% in 1972, when 18 year olds were given the right to vote.

Besides not voting, the best and the brightest are also not choosing government service. But they are choosing to change the world through new technology and communications. This presents an important opportunity for e-government to attract young people to a bold, new enterprise and connect people of all ages to the public policy arena.

Two recent Council opinion polls, conducted by Hart/Teeter over the last few months, show that Americans today recognize the potential of electronic government.

- A large majority (73%) says that developing e-government should be a high priority for the new president.

- Even 44% of the public who say government is ineffective are bullish about e-government and say tax dollars should be invested in e-government.

- But by a margin of 2-1, the public wants to proceed carefully down the road to e-government, saying privacy and security are their top priorities.

- The public's vision of e-government goes beyond efficiency and services to the opportunity to become more involved and to hold government and elected officials more directly accountable for their actions and results. It was surprising that access to candidates' voting records online was rated more favorably (77%) than renewing drivers' licenses online (53%).

The vision of our e-government blueprint is government truly of, by, and for the people—where they no longer have to wait in line between eight and five on weekdays, but where they can *be* online anytime, anywhere—not only to get information but to complete transactions with government, receive services, talk with elected representatives, eventually even to vote.

We envision a government that organizes and offers its information and services around the needs of people rather than the organization of government agencies.

There are several important guiding principles for e-government:

· It has to be easy to use, accessible to everyone, private and secure, and innovative.

· We have to invest in public-private, interagency, and intergovernmental partnerships to design, implement, and manage truly effective e-government.

· And we have to eliminate the digital divide providing not only access but also education to those who need it.

Our recommendations focus on leadership, the strategic investment of working capital, a skilled e-government workforce, collaboration between government and business, creative approaches to privacy, security, and interoperability, and access and education.

The dot.gov revolution is just beginning. Even at this early stage, there are many examples of the productive use of the internet by government.

· In 2000, more than two million applications for

financial aid received by the Department of Education were filed online.

· Taxes can be filed on line with the IRS and in many states (for example, Virginia, California, and Kentucky)

· Drivers can renew their licenses and car registrations, and pay tickets online in many states.

· Procurement online is growing at the federal and state levels.

· The Department of Transportation posts all of its regulations online for information and comment.

These examples of e-government all fall into the categories of Government to Citizens (G to C), and Government to Business (G to B). What is missing? Government to Government (G to G). At this point there is very little cross agency or intergovernmental collaboration on line and this is a significant problem. The Congress has set an ambitious goal for the federal government (through the Government Paperwork Elimination Act) to offer all of its services and transactions online by 2003. This is a challenge that should be taken seriously by setting priorities based on customer needs and impact to get services and transactions on line in an integrated, user friendly way. This will require collaboration across agencies which serve the same customers and effective partnerships with other levels of government and the private sector.

The development of S. 803, the E-Government Act, is an example of e-government in action. Just over a year ago, Senator Thompson and Senator Lieberman launched the first ever Senate website to gather and exchange ideas about what should be in this legislation.

That contributed significantly to the bill now before you, which addresses the important issues required for e-government to succeed. Although the details of its provisions are not exactly the same as the recommendations in our blueprint for e-government, it focuses on the essential elements of leadership, strategic investment, a skilled e-government workforce, access, and education, and privacy

and security. It calls for government on line in dimensions ranging from basic information, regulatory proceedings, and the courts, to research and development to be offered to the public.

This legislation provides an excellent framework for discussion and negotiation to significantly advance e-government. I think you may find, as we did in developing our blueprint for e-government, that the process of engaging key players in government, business, and the civic and research communities to refine this bill will build the ownership and commitment necessary to break down the barriers to e-government.

Leadership must come not only from OMB and the CIO Council but from the President, the cabinet, the Congress, governors, mayors, state legislators, and the judiciary. All must embrace e-government as a tool to improve government performance and revitalize our democracy.

I commend three of our specific recommendations to you for consideration:

1. Creating a public-private council that would bring the best thinking of private entrepreneurs and a cross section of federal, state, and local leaders to the e-government enterprise.

2. Establishing a Congressional Office of Electronic Government to help members of the House and Senate connect more effectively with the public and to advise members and   committees on using e-government to achieve policy goals.

3. Organizing public forums around the country to engage the public, including those on the wrong side of the digital divide, in the design and implementation of e-government.

The E-government Fund in this bill recognizes, as does the President's budget, that we need to invest in collaboration across agencies, levels of government, and with the private sector. That will break down the organizational stovepipes that now give us e-government within agency systems only—systems that are not interoperable or easy to use unless you are seeking information or service from only one agency.

Because the $45 billion now devoted to information technology is appropriated agency by agency, the stovepipes are formidable. The challenge is not only to provide an adequate e-government fund to foster collaboration, but to provide incentives for agencies to collaborate in the use of their much larger IT budgets.

The potential long term savings of e-government are enormous. For example, in Arizona, the cost of vehicle registration renewals has dropped from a $7 paper process to $1.50 on line. At the Social Security Administration, phone transactions on their award winning toll free number that now cost $10 could be reduced to 10 cents on line. Just think what the potential cost savings are across virtually every function of government at every level.

We applaud the provisions in S. 803 that allow share-in-savings contracting in which the contractor could be paid a portion of the savings and the agencies would be allowed to keep a portion for additional investments in information technology.

The offering of services, transactions, and information to the public, businesses and other customers of government in a truly user friendly way will require breakthroughs that are not likely to occur unless given high priority, adequate funding streams, and accountability for results.

The answers may lie in more powerful search engines, portals or on line exchanges that can integrate and offer a range of services based on need and eligibility. The innovative know-how to accomplish this vision of e-government exists in the public and private sectors. It must be harnessed in a new way.

We conclude our report by saying, "Leaders in the public and private sectors must, together, seize this opportunity to take bold, decisive action to make electronic government a reality. The people are ready. We can do this together."

Thank you Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to be here today.

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