

## TESTIMONY



**TESTIMONY OF DR. COSTIS TOREGAS  
PRESIDENT, PUBLIC TECHNOLOGY, INC.  
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
“S-803 bill on E-Gov: an opportunity for the  
federal system  
of government to modernize”  
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My name is Costis Toregas, and I am president of Public Technology, Inc. (PTI). I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on the important topic of “E-Gov” or “Electronic Government”. PTI is the non profit Research and Development local government organization, and our membership of innovative cities and counties has been innovating with the definition, development and deployment of E-Gov for much of the decade of the nineties. PTI is also the technology arm for the National League of Cities (NLC), the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and has been assisting all local governments better leverage the opportunities inherent in the E-Gov strategies through seminars, publications and surveys.

Although S803 is comprehensive and addresses a variety of issues, I will contain my remarks to the topic of E-Gov. PTI’s CIO Donald Evans has provided testimony to the Subcommittee on Technology and Procurement Policy of the US House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform, which places on the record PTI’s thoughts about the office of the federal CIO, and I will not duplicate this. (April 3, 2001 Enterprise-wide Strategies for Managing Information Resources and Technology: Learning from State and Local Governments)

The experience of local governments in E-Gov (for detailed approaches to E-Gov in the local government space, please see [http://www.pti.org/links/e\\_government.html](http://www.pti.org/links/e_government.html)) can be summarized in a small number of Guiding Principles which I believe have merit for the federal government as well. Among them are

1. E-Gov encompasses the improvement of *service delivery* to the citizen, the creation of *economic activity* and the safeguarding of *Democracy*. Each of these dimensions is important in its own right and must be addressed in any E-Gov investment.
2. E-Gov must be oriented towards the citizen. The citizen does not care what level of government or agency provides the needed service, therefore the inter agency and inter governmental dimensions are essential.
3. E-Gov demands an E-citizen. Before we can call an E-Gov program successful, it must be made available to all citizens, not just those who can afford to pay or can find the electronic infrastructure available today.
4. E-Gov provides an opportunity to re-engineer the way government operates. Merely automating existing services is inadequate and does not match the potential of this promising technology
5. E-Gov is an opportunity to establish viable and sustainable partnerships between the private and public sectors under which each side provides capacity in areas of competitive advantage.

When these Guiding Principles are matched against the elements of S803, several opportunities for decisive, modernizing action can be found. Amongst them are the following:

1. E-Gov is an opportunity to create a national, not federal agency system for citizen service and engagement. Therefore all resources (human, fiscal and managerial) should be used as a

mechanism to harmonize federal, state and local investments in the application of IT. The \$45 billion federal investment in IT, when matched with the \$65 billion investment at the state and local level could produce a significant pool of resources with which to construct a truly citizen-centric system.

2. In order to develop a truly citizen-centric system, one must know what the citizen wants. Local governments are in a position to know in more detail the desires and needs of the citizen, as they interact with them on a daily basis. It may be wise, therefore, to identify the priorities of the citizens of the United States in E-Gov, and then develop a set of priorities around them. Such a citizen-first approach may suggest a strategy different from a uniform effort across each and every agency initially. Instead of addressing E-Gov across all agencies and departments simultaneously, it may be wise to concentrate funding around areas in which citizens attach a high priority, learn from the experiences and then scale the successful efforts to a national system.
3. Pilots which explore the inter agency and inter governmental potential of E-Gov should be given priority. *Horizontal* systems provide applications that unify different agencies; *vertical* systems emphasize the intergovernmental dimension of systems. What E-Gov provides is the opportunity to create *diagonal* systems that are oriented towards the citizen. And in order to move them forward, it is suggested that pilots (or perhaps challenge grants) be used. Organized around federal, state and local agencies with a shared responsibility to deliver service, create economic activity and/or promote democracy, these pilots can establish Protocols which can then be used in spreading the benefits of E-Gov to our entire federal system of government.
4. The development of truly “diagonal” systems for E-Gov would require front end coordination by all three levels of government, but could produce significant cost savings and service

improvements once implemented. Using an architectural approach coupled with standardization on digital certificates/signatures could enable most government-to-government transactions to take place electronically eliminating thousands upon thousands of man-hours of labor and faster turnaround of standard transactions. Such an approach could also improve government to business transactions again with considerable savings.

5. The expertise in information technology (IT) of the Chief Information Officers and other technology experts should be matched with the programmatic capacity of line government employees expert in the specifics of each governmental area when constructing E-Gov solutions. The challenge of ensuring not only technological but programmatic excellence must be approached from the human perspective and aggressively managed.
6. The digital divide between the haves and have nots is real today. Both at the personal level, as well as the geographic one, there are disparities for access which must be addressed at the national level, and S803 is a good place to start with an investment in not studying this onerous divide but creating bridges for the citizens.
7. We made a major investment as a nation in preparing for the Y2K "bug". The lessons PTI, as well as other major national institutions learned and promulgated to our constituencies is that technology opportunities must be dealt as management issues, not technology ones with a strong role for elected officials providing leadership. E-Gov is yet another opportunity for the capacity of technology to be shaped and organized efficiently around societal concerns, with elected officials playing a key role in its definition.
8. The technology of GIS (Geographic Information Systems) is mature enough today to provide an interoperable platform around which different

**agencies and levels of government can collaborate and provide seamless service. The experience of local agencies has been strong and positive around this defining role for geography.**

**Today there is an effort to organize those experiences around the Local Leaders for GIS, and also to reflect local initiatives in FGDC, the Open GIS Consortium and other similar efforts. We need to ensure that GIS is central to any E-Gov effort, and that the strong experiences of local governments are incorporated in attempts to standardize and define requirements for GIS interoperability.**

- 9. There is currently no intergovernmental vehicle which can assist in the definition and execution of E-Gov strategies at the national level. Individual agencies are left to fend for themselves, and intergovernmental, as well as interdepartmental cooperation is usually penalized, not incentivized. S803 should address this void by organizing a truly representative, Intergovernmental Panel which reflects the voices of elected, general management and technology leaders from all 3 levels of government and which has the authority and financing necessary to launch pilots, as well as encourage the full scale deployment of diagonal E-Gov systems to benefit all citizens. Beyond actual direct financing authority, such a Panel could provide a mechanism under which existing funding for programs currently authorized could be enhanced or reduced according to the program's ability to satisfy the E-Gov initiative.**

**PTI and its membership of 100 innovative cities and counties stands ready to assist in the creation of a truly national E-Gov effort. Much in the local government experiences in E-Gov is readily transferable to the federal level. Cities like Seattle, Des Moines and San Carlos, and counties like Montgomery County, Dade County and Fairfax County are providing on-line access today which push the citizen-centric model to the limits already. We know what has been successful, what has failed, and why. Many local government CIO's have been**

**successful in eliminating the barriers inside our own organizations that may have kept us from being as effective as we should be. We have convinced our peers to subsume their egos to become part of an enterprise that presents a single face to our citizens. These lessons can be helpful in constructing a federal E-Gov strategy, and local officials are ready to contribute and participate in its definition.**

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