



Testimony of
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Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia

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Introduction

Subcommittee Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich, and Subcommittee Members, first I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about Telework Policies and Initiatives in the Federal Government. I'd also like to acknowledge Senator Stevens and Senator Landrieu and thank them for introducing S. 1000, The Telework Enhancement Act of 2007. HP supports this bill as a step forward in promoting telework within the federal government.

My name is David Isaacs, and I am the Director of Federal Government Affairs for Hewlett-Packard Company (HP). My company has a portfolio that spans printing, personal computing, software, services and IT infrastructure and is among the world's largest IT companies. HP focuses on simplifying technology experiences for all of its customers, which range from individual consumers to the largest businesses to the federal government.

Here in Washington, HP supports public policies that maximize the ability of individuals, companies, and the government to innovate, because innovation benefits our citizens, strengthens the U.S. economy and help companies succeed in the global marketplace. Telework policies are a prime example of how technology and innovation can help the federal government improve its operations and efficiency.

Our views on telework are informed by two perspectives: first, HP is a technology provider to the federal government that can provide solutions to the federal customer in areas such as security; and second, we are a major U.S. corporation that offers teleworking arrangements to thousands of our employees.

In short, telework is a good example of how technology and innovation can help the federal government to address major challenges.

Telework in the U.S. Government

Federal law states that “Each executive agency shall establish a policy under which eligible employees of the agency may participate in telecommuting to the maximum extent possible without diminishing employee performance.” That law, Section 359 of Public Law 106-346 (the FY 2001 Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act), defines telecommuting as “any arrangement in which an employee regularly performs officially assigned duties at home or other work sites geographically convenient to the residence of the employee.” It further defines eligible employee as “. . . any satisfactorily performing employee of the agency whose job may typically be performed at least one day per week at an alternative workplace.” Part of this law required 100% of eligible Federal employees to telework by 2004, but by 2004, agencies had only achieved 14% compliance.

U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has strong data on telework that provides a clear picture of the state of telework in the U.S. government today. Overall, according to GSA, telework continues to grow in the Federal Government. For example, from 2003 to 2004, there was a 37 percent increase in the number of teleworkers (102,921 to 140,694) and the number of employees teleworking as a percentage of those eligible increased from 14 percent in 2003 to 19 percent in 2004. Thirty-eight agencies (46 percent) reported that more than 25 percent of their workforce participated in telework during 2004. However, it is important to note that approximately only 41 percent of Federal employees were eligible to telework during 2004. So while that number is an improvement, the program is still not being utilized to its fullest potential.

HP supports efforts to promote teleworking within the federal government. The Telework Enhancement Act of 2007 (S. 1000), introduced by Senators Stevens and Landrieu, is an important step in making telework pervasive throughout the federal government. The requirements of that law would remove several of the barriers that are currently impeding the adoption of telework practices in the federal government.

Benefits of Teleworking

HP feels that telework policies should be enhanced for the Federal Government to not only maximize the number of eligible employees who are able to use this program, but also to increase the number of employees who are eligible in the first place. We take that position at HP because we see many benefits that teleworking can have to the Federal Government. Important benefits of teleworking include:

- Improved continuity of operations in the event of natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and other events;
- Reduced traffic congestion;
- Energy savings and reduced greenhouse gas emissions;
- Greater employee productivity, including the ability to stay connected while traveling;
- Greater employee job satisfaction from shorter commuting times and accommodation of work-life balance; and
- Increased ability to recruit and retain top talent for the Federal Government, including the ability to attract young workers entering the workforce who have grown up connected through technology and expect the same in their work lives.

Major Technology Challenges

Despite all of these important advantages to teleworking, some challenges certainly still exist and must be overcome before we can turn the goal of teleworking into a reality for more American workers. I currently see four major obstacles to implementing teleworker solutions for the Federal Government.

The first is information security. We have all seen news reports over the past several years of stolen or missing laptops from Federal agencies. Perhaps the most widely publicized example of this was the lost Department of Veterans Affairs laptop computer containing names, Social Security Numbers and other information on 26 million veterans a little over a year ago.

A second concern is the prospect of telework solutions that fail to meet the needs of each remote worker. Different employees have different technology needs in computing, printing, voice, and other services. A "one-size-fits-all" package that lacks flexibility will likely fail to achieve the anticipated benefits of teleworking in an efficient fashion.

Third, the ability to provide effective service and support for teleworkers has been another challenge. Many people worry that they will experience technical difficulties from a remote location, without the advantage of having a support specialist nearby to help fix the problem and get them back to work quickly.

And fourth, there have been technical challenges to ensuring that teleworkers are able to collaborate with their colleagues in other locations, including the ability for them to have secure network access.

Technology Solutions

Just as technology has enabled teleworking to exist in today's society, we in the technology industry have also made great strides to provide solutions to these challenges and enable even more workers to telework.

To address the first challenge I mentioned of information security concerns, there are now technology solutions to that problem. HP, for example, has been the first information technology company to provide a comprehensive solution offering for teleworkers. This includes an HP notebook computer ("laptop") that comes with built-in security features including secured biometric access. It also comes with Absolute software and a three-year subscription to Absolute services built into the price of the notebook. The Absolute software includes Computrace, a program that functions like a computer LoJack, allowing the machine to be tracked down and recovered. In the event the computer holds very sensitive data, the user can begin a remote data deletion through the network that will completely erase the hard drive and any danger of lost confidential data.

The second challenge I mentioned concerns the varying needs of different mobile workers. Telework solutions must take into account different job responsibilities and working styles. In short, there is no single type of mobile worker, and telework solutions must be flexible and focus on individual functionality and needs. Telework solutions must also take a holistic approach, and address the types of devices (computing, printing, etc.) and support and services in a comprehensive, integrated fashion. Procurement decisions for teleworkers should be structured in a manner that takes these considerations into account, while also allowing for growth and change as technology evolves.

The third challenge of providing effective service and support to remote employees can be addressed through services such as what we call "HP Total

Care.” This program can be individually customized to meet the needs of users, and includes features such as:

- Virus protection
- 24/7 on-line professional support
- Next business day disk retention services and accidental damage protection
- Tracking of stolen or missing computers
- Remote deletion of data in the event a device is missing

The final challenge is enabling remote collaboration in a productive manner. One way of addressing this concern is through videoconferencing. In telework centers, for example, where employees work remotely from the office from a centralized facility for teleworkers, it makes sense to install high quality videoconferencing capabilities. HP, for example, has developed what we call a Halo Virtual Collaboration Studio. This service enables users to truly feel as if they are in the same room, thereby allowing employees and others to work productively in a remote fashion – across town or across the ocean.

HP Telework Programs

As we consider ways to increase the teleworking capacity of the U.S. Federal Government, I believe we can learn from the experiences and best practices of the private sector as well. HP is proud to advocate for policies that allow the Federal Government and others to increase the viability of teleworking, and we are also proud that we have put these beliefs into action for our own employees.

Approximately 10,400 employees in the United States and Canada telework, and many thousands more work remotely during travel or from their homes on an occasional basis. Our telework program at HP is available to employees based on their job responsibilities, approval from their manager, and other factors. Our program has numerous tools to ensure that the arrangement works effectively for everyone – such as a telework self-assessment, a checklist, a guide on setting up a home office and more.

The benefits we have seen from teleworking have been fantastic, not only for the company but also for our employees and for society as a whole. We have gained more employee satisfaction and retention, stronger business continuity, and enhanced productivity and real-time collaboration. Our employees have gained greater flexibility and work-life balance in addition to the cost savings of commuting. Finally, HP feels strongly that there are also broad societal benefits to

teleworking, especially from an environmental standpoint due to reduced energy consumption and traffic mitigation.

We estimate that in 2006, HP's telework program saved almost 2.5 million round-trip commutes, avoiding approximately 65 million miles of road travel and almost 28,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. In recognition of this impact, HP received the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Commuter Choice Award in 2002.

Conclusion

I hope this business perspective has helped add to the Committee's understanding of not only the current state of telework, but also how technology solutions can help address some of the issues, improve the situation and make the option of telework more widely available within the Federal Government. Technology solutions such as those provided by HP and others in the technology industry can now enable the Federal government to enjoy more of the benefits of telework, while at the same time minimizing risks and challenges.

Our own experience with telework at HP has shown us first-hand the benefits the flexibility of telework can provide to employers, employees and the broader community. We would be happy to work with you further to explain our program, or to demonstrate the technologies that are available for the Federal Government and others to use to allow for an increased number of Americans to realize the benefits of telework.

We are very pleased to see the leadership of this Committee and the leadership of Senators Stevens and Landrieu for taking action on this important issue. Again, I thank you very much for the opportunity to testify before you here today and we at HP remain eager to assist as you move forward with policies to enhance telework for federal employees.