

Overview of JCOTS: Where it's been, where it's going May, 2004

- JCOTS was created as a permanent legislative agency by the 1997 Virginia General Assembly
- The creation of JCOTS was the result of a Joint Legislative Task Force on Science and Technology. In reviewing a number of technology related questions and issues, the Task Force was asked to review whether a legislative standing committee should be created. The Task Force did not recommend creating a standing House and Senate committee, largely because at the time, a secretariat for science and technology did not exist at the time. However, the Task Force did recommend the creation of creating by statute a legislative commission devoted to science and technology.
- The task force found that "in order to implement informed, long-term public policy and practical direction, state legislatures can no longer delegate the need for consistent, reliable, and accurate information about science and technology; they must demonstrate **leadership** in how such information is sought, processed, managed, and monitored."
- Since it's creation, the goal of JCOTS has been to provide this kind of leadership in examining and implementing science & technology-related public policy for the Commonwealth.
- Since it's creation, JCOTS has studied many cutting-edge issues, and produced numerous pieces of important legislation that have been adopted by the General Assembly, such as UCITA, centralizing IT functions in the Commonwealth, and computer crimes.
- Issues studied since creation:
 - Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996
 - Virginia's data processing and information technology services
 - Year 200 compatibility
 - Electronic signatures
 - Civil & criminal laws in light of technology developments
 - Technology-based economic growth
 - Access to the Internet in Virginia's public schools & libraries
 - Access to information technology for the blind & visually impaired
 - UCC Revised Article 2B
 - Workforce issues
 - Standards of Quality & educational technology
 - Electronic government
 - UETA (Uniform Electronic Transactions Act)
 - UCITA (Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act)

- Electronic Communications Meetings
 - Use of wireless communications by localities
 - Internet privacy
 - Webcasting
 - Intellectual Property
 - Biotechnology
 - Internet Gambling
 - Website Protection
 - Electronic monitoring of employees
 - Virginia's aerospace industry
 - Electronic notaries
 - Electronic procurement/eVA
 - Advertising on government websites
 - Digital divide in Virginia
 - Technology infrastructure
 - Privacy
 - Critical infrastructure
 - CIT (Center for Innovative Technology)
 - Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act
 - Unsolicited e-mail
 - Entrepreneurial development
 - Consumer protection in electronic commerce transactions
 - Identity theft
 - Government Data Collection & Dissemination Practices Act
 - Use of Social Security Numbers in the public & private sector
 - Computer Crimes
 - Nanotechnology
 - Event Data Recorders
 - VITA (Virginia Information Technologies Agency)
- Issues on 2005 Proposed Workplan:
 - Electronic toll collection
 - Off-shoring & out-sourcing
 - Electronics recycling
 - Certified e-mail
 - Underground transmission lines
 - Use of soil stabilizers
 - Use of cell phones while driving
 - Education & workforce training
 - Continued study of the nanotechnology industry
 - Intellectual property commercialization
 - Modeling & simulation industry
 - Database breaches
 - Biometrics
 - Event data records
 - Online dating

- As evidenced by these topics, science & technology issues are almost always intertwined with other more general areas of the law, such as commerce & labor, procurement, criminal law, transportation, administration of government, etc. Emerging technologies bring about new questions and issues relating to existing laws and business structures.
- Some issues require a revisit as technology continues to evolve. For example, JCOTS has looked at procurement-related issues and workforce training more than once, but new issues continue to emerge -- requiring another look.
- JCOTS works to identify emerging technology issues, as can be seen through the proposed 2005 Emerging Issues Advisory Committee. JCOTS attempts to act proactively with technology issues, and not just reactively.