

HJ 144

November 15, 2006 Meeting Summary

The Joint Subcommittee to study telework opportunities for the public and private sector held its final meeting of the 2006 Interim on November 15 in Richmond. The two-year subcommittee will continue to meet in the 2007 Interim to develop recommendations.

Karen Jackson, director of the newly-created Office of Telework Assistance and Broadband Deployment, introduced herself to the committee. She said that the Office is currently working on developing telework awards for successful telework programs. She is also trying to work with the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) and other state agencies to identify barriers to telework, and to identify policies and procedures that need to be addressed.

Farley Beaton, Chief Technology and Security Officer with the Virginia Retirement System and a member of the Council on Technology Services (COTS), provided an overview of the work of COTS as it relates to telework. He chairs the COTS Mobile Workforce Workforce, whose primary mission is to identify information that makes it easier for managers to pursue telework programs. The workgroup is currently developing a paper that will describe telework best practices. The work is not focused on creating best practices, but on gathering information available from a variety of sources and sifting through the information to provide relevant information to government managers in an easy-to-use format. The paper will look at business rules, technology enablers, and a measurement program. He said that the group expects to complete the project in the mid February. Senator Devolites Davis suggested that if the paper is completed while the 2007 General Assembly is still convened, that a presentation of the paper be arranged for the House Committee on Technology and Science and the Senate Committee on General Laws and Technology.

One of the study mandates directs the joint subcommittee to examine the impact of increased telework opportunities on the continuity of government operations in the event of a natural or manmade disaster. To assist with this discussion, Curtis Brown, Special Assistant to the Governor with Office of Commonwealth Preparedness, provided an overview of continuity of operation (COOP) planning in the Commonwealth.

The Office of Commonwealth Preparedness was originally created by executive order, and was codified by the 2006 General Assembly. The office provides oversight and review of emergency management plans, and coordinates efforts between state agencies and the Governor's cabinet. Preparedness is a component of each agency's mission. The office has been working to focus efforts on COOP plans and the need to coordinate a statewide strategy. IT solutions, such as telework, will be an essential part of this strategy.

Next, representatives from VITA discussed pandemic planning and infrastructure issues. Peggy Ward, the Chief Information Security and Internal Audit Officer with VITA, explained some of the issues unique to planning for a pandemic, as opposed to other

disasters. The duration of a pandemic would be in the realm of months, not days or weeks like other events, and would likely reduce the workforce by 30 to 40 percent. VITA convened a Pandemic Flu Preparedness Committee in May of 2006 to address the IT concerns that would relate to a pandemic. Telework is one aspect of the readiness plan. VITA's goal, under such a circumstance, would be to maintain essential Commonwealth functions. However, what is "essential" will vary from agency to agency, and will change based on the duration of the event. Once essential functions are identified, there would be a need to assess the capacity needed to support telework on that scale. VITA is also working with the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness on its Continuity of Operations and Pandemic subcommittees.

Fred Duball, Director of the Service Management Organization at VITA, briefed the joint subcommittee on the Commonwealth's networks and the infrastructure necessary to support telework. Currently, VITA runs about 85 separate networks -- a direct result of each agency creating its own network prior to the creation of VITA. Because each network is different, it is difficult to develop a single approach to managing the infrastructure. VITA envisions a single, centrally-managed network, or "enterprise network," by 2009. This single network will serve as a better foundation for a variety of telework solutions; however, in the meantime, VITA is working with agencies to support telework.

The joint subcommittee will schedule its next meeting after the 2007 Session of the General Assembly.