

*Statement
Of
Chairman Wm. Lacy Clay, Chairman
Information Policy, Census, and National Archives Subcommittee
Oversight and Government Reform Committee
Thursday, June 17, 2010
2154 Rayburn HOB
2:00 p.m.*

“Federal Electronic Records Management: A Status Report”

Welcome to today’s hearing, a status report on federal electronic records management. In the course of carrying out their responsibilities, federal agencies create records, many of them electronic, that document the rights of American citizens, the actions of federal officials, and the national experience.

It is the responsibility of each agency, with the support of the National Archives, or NARA, to economically and effectively create and manage records necessary to meet business needs and to keep records long enough to protect rights and assure accountability. The National Archives has an additional responsibility to make sure that records of permanent archival value are preserved and made available for future generations. The focus of today’s hearing is not on NARA’s responsibility to preserve and make those records available, but on federal agencies’ management of their electronic records.

This has been a topic of interest to Congress for many years. In 2003, the Government Accountability Office, or GAO, testified at a hearing of this Subcommittee that “most electronic records...remain unscheduled...and as a result, they were at risk of loss.” The Subcommittee Chairman at the time stated that “while NARA has been charged with oversight responsibility regarding these matters, they have been provided little, if any authority, to enforce compliance.”

As we will hear from our witnesses today, the state of electronic records management has not changed much since 2003. During a recent self-assessment administered by NARA, seventy nine percent of agencies were found to be at moderate or high risk of improper destruction of their electronic records.

However, initiatives adopted by the Administration within the last eighteen months as well as renewed congressional oversight have produced signs of hope. The requirements of the Open Government Initiative and NARA’s public ratings of agencies may finally give records management programs the high level of attention they need in order to improve.