

**Statement of Representative Frank R. Wolf
before the House Oversight Subcommittee on Federal
Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia**

HEARING ON TELEWORK: BREAKING NEW GROUND

November 6, 2007

**Chairman Davis, thank you for the opportunity
to testify on the benefits of teleworking.**

To put it simply: Telecommuting works.

**I have said many times that there is nothing
magic in strapping ourselves into a metal box every
day only to drive to an office where we sit behind a
desk working on a computer when we can sit
behind that computer elsewhere.**

Telecommuting is the 21st century workplace.

Telecommuting is a traffic issue.

Telecommuting is an air quality and

environmental issue.

Telecommuting is a continuity of operations issue in a time of emergency.

Telecommuting is an energy savings issue.

And telecommuting is a quality of life issue.

As the nation's largest employer, the federal government should be the model for telework.

As you know, because of a provision I inserted in the FY 2001 Transportation Appropriations bill, all federal agencies must allow every eligible employee who wants to telework and whose job lends itself to telework to do so.

However, we can only do so much in an appropriations bill. The time has come to pass a comprehensive framework for telework for the federal workforce.

I have been disappointed at the federal government's efforts in implementing the FY 2001 law. I am constantly contacted by federal employees who are being denied their right to telework. This constant back and forth must end. Efforts at OPM and GSA has made strides in promoting telework, but those strides need duplicating in every federal agency and with every federal manager.

To put some teeth into this effort, in both the FY 2005 and 2006 Science-State-Justice-Commerce Appropriations bills I inserted a provision to withhold \$5 million each from the budgets of the departments of Commerce, Justice and State and now NASA, until those agencies ensure that all their eligible workers are permitted to telecommute.

Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, I wrote President Bush asking him to make telework a priority of his administration. In the letter, I noted that many of the nation's leading security experts have pointed to telecommuting as key to ensuring that the government continues to operate during and after catastrophic events.

September 11, the anthrax scare, and Hurricane Katrina have exposed vulnerabilities in our nation which can disrupt government and business operations. In the wake of these events, a government-wide telework program should be the cornerstone of the federal workplace to ensure that necessary telework habits are in place in the event of a similar disaster in the future. With a federal telework model, the private sector could also expand its telework options to ensure that the public and private sectors – which operate as partners in so many areas – remain operational during any disaster.

Finally, rising gas prices are having a major impact on our nation's commuters who must travel dozens of miles each day to work, including federal

employees. My congressional district includes the Shenandoah Valley. Early in the morning when I am heading to meetings or events in this area, I see a steady stream of cars coming from places like Winchester and Front Royal toward Washington to the federal workplace. These commutes can take two or more hours each way.

An effective federal telework program would help these commuters not only save on gas, it would help the federal government retain workers who might otherwise look to the private sector for a workplace closer to home.

Telework is a win-win for the federal government. It increases worker productivity. It improves morale. It gives employees a chance to spend time with their families or simply use their

free time as they see fit. It improves air quality and it can save the federal government money by helping to reduce real estate costs and increase worker retention.

In short, telecommuting works. I encourage support of the comprehensive framework bill that I have been working on with Chairman Davis and Representative Sarbanes and also ask for your support for H.Con.Res. 224 to establish National Telework Week, which would set aside one week a year for employers and employees to give telework a try. I urge support for both of these measures. The time for this legislation has come. The time for telework is now.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman for allowing me to participate in this hearing. ***