

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION POLICY,
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND THE CENSUS
CONGRESSMAN ADAM PUTNAM, CHAIRMAN**



NEWS RELEASE

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**GAO REPORTS PROGRESS OF
GOVERNMENTAL SMART CARD PROJECTS**

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Adam H. Putnam (FL-12), the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations, and the Census today made the following statement on the release of a General Accountability Office (GAO) report titled: “Electronic Government; Federal Agencies continue to Invest in Smart Card Technology:”

“I am pleased that individual agencies and the Office of Management and Budget are taking the necessary steps to consolidate smart card projects and to examine opportunities for enterprise approaches to achieve a more integrated, efficient, and cost-effective solution,” said Putnam.

In accordance with the President’s vision of a more responsive and cost-effective government, GAO reports that Federal agencies continue to move towards integrated agency-wide initiatives that use smart cards as identity credentials that agency employees can use to gain both physical access to facilities and logical access to computer systems and networks, thus enhancing overall security.

“Smart Cards will become an essential tool in the toolbox for security, identity verification, access to necessary locations and information, and credentialing interoperability across government in the very near future,” said Putnam. GAO also indicated in the report that even stronger authentication can and will be achieved by using smart cards in conjunction with biometrics, passwords, and public key infrastructure.

In the GAO report titled “Electronic Government; Federal Agencies continue to Invest in Smart Card Technology,” the GAO identifies a total of 24 projects, of which 16

projects reported that they are in planning, pilot, or operational phases and are intended to support a variety of uses. In January 2003, it was reported that there were some 52 various project at some phase of concept, design, development or implementation. As a result of Congressional oversight, a new examination produced opportunities for consolidation and integration of projects and resulted in 28 projects being discontinued and absorbed into other smart card projects or deemed no longer feasible.

The federal government's adoption of smart card technology is advancing with a number of agencies purchasing smart cards under the GSA's Smart Card Access Common ID contracting vehicle that promises to help reduce the cost and ensure that vendors incorporate interoperability specifications.

"My Subcommittee is dedicated to continuing its oversight of Smart Card projects to ensure the appropriate application of this technology to achieve greater security for federal agencies and federal employees," Putnam concluded. "With GAO's valuable assistance in providing timely reports, all smart card programs will remain under a watchful eye."

The report noted the following actions taken to address earlier recommendations:

- OMB issued a government-wide policy directing major departments and agencies to coordinate and consolidate investments related to authentication and identity management, including the implementation of smart card technology;
- NIST has improved and updated the government smart card interoperability specification to address additional technologies, including contactless cards and biometrics; and
- GSA updated its "Smart Card Policy and Administration Guidance" to better address security priorities, including minimum-security standards for federal facilities, computer systems, and data across the government.

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