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## President Bush Signs eGovernment Act of 2002 into Law

In December, President Bush signed into law the eGovernment Act of 2002. The Act, originally introduced by Sen. Joseph Lieberman in 2001, passed both the House and Senate unanimously—demonstrating Congress' strong, bipartisan support for government-wide and enterprise-level eGovernment programs and initiatives.

The Act codifies into law much of the President's Management Agenda and introduces a wide range of new programs, procedures, and regulations. First, the bill establishes an Office of Electronic Government in the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to more centrally manage Federal eGovernment activities and initiatives. It also contains provisions for creating a government-wide eGovernment Fund and for new, more flexible options for technology exchanges with the private sector. Lastly, the legislation includes additional eGovernment reporting requirements, both from agencies to OMB and from OMB to Congress, and additional information security requirements designed to standardize and strengthen agency security programs.

OMB's new Office of Electronic Government will expand upon the current organization headed by Mark Forman to coordinate all Federal eGovernment and information technology (IT) activities, including managing the Presidential eGovernment Initiatives. It will act as a central point of contact for eGovernment issues with Federal agencies and set standards and policies to enable multi-agency collaboration. The Office of Electronic Government will also manage other IT initiatives such as the development of reporting processes and overseeing work on the Federal Enterprise Architecture.

The eGovernment Fund will provide a central funding pool to support government-wide initiatives as well as innovative eGovernment initiatives in agencies or departments. For FY 2002, \$5 million was appropriated to the fund; \$50 million was authorized for FY 2003 (although this amount has been reduced to \$5 million in the final 2003 budget). By FY 2006, the Act authorizes up to \$150 million per year for the fund.

The eGovernment Act encourages more share-in-savings contracts (where the government shares the savings gained through an initiative with contractors in lieu of payment), expanding on a previous pilot program to authorize these contracts in a wider range of situations. The Act also creates new public-private technology transfer programs that will allow government to take advantage of best-practice solutions from the private sector while sharing public sector employees' knowledge.

Finally, there are a number of important new regulations and procedures that USDA and other Federal agencies must follow. These include:

- Developing performance goals and measures, linked to key stakeholder groups, that demonstrate how eGovernment in general, as well as individual initiatives, enable progress towards agency strategic goals;
- Considering impacts on privacy and on Americans without Internet access when developing eGovernment initiatives;
- Submitting an annual eGovernment Report to OMB on the status of implementing initiatives and compliance with the eGovernment Act, and
- Posting to the Web all regulatory information that must appear in the *Federal Register* and accepting electronic input from citizens for the rulemaking process (*see related story below*).

For more information on the Act's effects on USDA, or any aspect of the bill, contact the eGovernment Team.

## Regulations.Gov Site Launched, Allowing Greater Citizen Input into Rulemaking Process

Have you ever wanted to provide comments on such issues as the labeling of organic food, workplace safety standards, or changes to the Food Stamp Program? With the introduction of [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) last month, submitting comments on a proposed federal regulation has never been easier or more accessible.

Online Rulemaking Management (ORM), one of the 24 government-wide Presidential eGovernment Initiatives, officially launched the Regulations.gov site last month to provide a single location for citizens to provide comments on proposed Federal regulations. As the one-stop Federal regulatory clearinghouse, Regulations.gov makes it easy for citizens to participate in Federal rulemaking and the democratic process. Now, USDA customers such as rural residents, agricultural producers, conservationists, and food program beneficiaries will be able to quickly and easily voice their opinion on proposed rules and regulations from a wide range of Federal agencies—ideally, increasing the number and quality of comments submitted by the public. Anticipating this, the site is expected to have the capacity to handle at least 16,000 comments per hour.

On Regulations.gov, citizens can view a description of every proposed Federal regulation currently open for comment, read the full version, and subsequently submit comments to the corresponding Federal agency. Citizens entering the Web site are able to view and comment on a rule quickly and easily, in support of OMB's ideal of "three clicks to service"—ensuring citizens are able to find the

specific service or function they need in a maximum of three mouse clicks. Regulations are sorted by agency, and those open for comment can also be found by searching on one or more keywords. A link then leads visitors to a Web page that guides them through the process of submitting comments. After comments have been collected and processed, and final rules are published, the final versions are made available on the site. Mike Poe, USDA liaison to the ORM initiative, underscores the site's ease of use: "With just a few clicks of the mouse, this is a convenient way for citizens and farmers to submit comments on USDA's rulemakings."

In addition to the content currently available, a number of upcoming enhancements to this site should make it more useful to citizens and interest groups. For example, electronic notifications of rules of interest to individual citizens and a system that lists the rules that receive the most comment are expected to be added in the near future, once all Federal agencies are integrated into the site.

USDA is a partner in the Online Rulemaking Management initiative, working closely with the Environmental Protection Agency, the managing partner, to make Regulations.gov a reality. To achieve this, USDA has contributed funding and expertise to the initiative and is integrating important rulemaking processes into the Regulations.gov site. The initial site launch includes proposed rules from USDA, including the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. As roll-out continues, all USDA agencies will be required to integrate with the site.

More information on Online Rulemaking Management is available at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). For more information on USDA's involvement, contact the eGovernment team.

### **Presidential Initiative Spotlight: Recruitment One-Stop**

Recruitment One-Stop (ROS), one of the 24 Presidential eGovernment Initiatives, is a collaborative effort between the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and many Federal agencies, including USDA. The initiative's purpose is to create a single Web site where citizens can not only research job opportunities across the Federal government, but also submit a single application for review at any agency and check the status of that application.

The systems developed by Recruitment One-Stop will extend upon the current USAJobs portal to provide additional benefits to both jobseekers and USDA human resources personnel. By developing a more integrated, one-stop portal, Recruitment One-Stop will allow citizens to:

- access a single, convenient resource to locate jobs across the Federal government
- save personal information, work history, and other resume information on the site, streamlining the process of filling out individual job applications
- check application status anytime, providing flexibility and saving time spent checking status via phone or fax

Further, the portal developed through Recruitment One-Stop will integrate with USDA systems, including automatically sending applications and other information to USDA recruitment and HR systems as well as retrieving application status and updated position openings from

USDA. This will save significant amounts of time for HR professionals by reducing duplicative data entry and time spent synchronizing USDA and OPM sites. In addition, the initiative will integrate with existing agency recruitment systems, including PeopleSoft, QuickHire, and Avue, ensuring continuity and reducing learning time.

The portal site for Recruitment One-Stop is now available at [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov). Leveraging the existing USAJobs site, the new recruitment site provides a platform for the initiative's planned capabilities. The site currently provides a consolidated search for open positions in the Federal government, and enhancements planned for this year include resume storage and application filling functions and seamless movement of job applicants from Recruitment One-Stop to agency assessment systems. Additional features are also planned.

By making the process of searching for positions and submitting applications easier for jobseekers, as well as streamlining recruiting management for HR personnel, Recruitment One-Stop hopes to increase overall satisfaction, decrease the amount of time it takes to find candidates, and improve the quality level of new hires. Further, the initiative supports the Strategic Management of Human Capital component of the President's Management Agenda by encouraging more people to apply for positions across the Federal government and by facilitating a coordinated, government-wide recruiting strategy including not only OPM but agencies across the government.

Because maintaining a skilled workforce is critical to delivering USDA's programs and services, the Department is supporting Recruitment One-Stop and integrating its systems with the initiative. USDA is working closely with OPM to coordinate the rollout of Recruitment One-Stop, as well as planning for integration of and synchronization between USDA and OPM systems. Said Joe Colantuoni, deputy director of USDA's Office of HR Management and liaison to the ROS initiative, "As we compete for talent, we must make it easier for highly qualified applicants to become part of USDA. As a partner in Recruitment One-Stop, I believe this project will help us do just that."

Further, USDA participated in an Information Technology Virtual Job Fair last spring, along with 22 other Federal agencies, creating one-stop recruiting for IT professionals interested in Federal employment. About 20,000 applicants applied for nearly 230 jobs across the government, with several offers and subsequent hires from USDA. The job fair served as a test for the concept of a recruitment portal, and the agencies involved in Recruitment One-Stop gained valuable insight from the event.

For more information on USDA's participation in this initiative, contact the eGovernment Team. The Recruitment One-Stop site, including listings of Federal job opportunities, is available at [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov).

**For more information on any of these topics, or for general comments or questions, contact the eGovernment Team at:**

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