

government information? Are there benefits to the public at large or only to relatively sophisticated professional researchers, environmentalists, historians, or scientists? Where should access be available—at libraries, schools, community centers, on home computers? Which enabling technologies should be pursued?

Participatory Democracy: Improving Everyone's Opportunity to Participate in Rulemaking and other Governmental Decisions

While several million Americans have electronic mail capability, with a population of more than 250 million, such access is still relatively limited. More and more agencies are advertising that they are now "on-line" and are soliciting citizens to contact them at their electronic mail address.

There is little dispute that using information technology to support government rulemaking can reduce costs for both agencies and the public. And, as a practical matter, electronic notices can possibly reach a greater number of interested parties than by merely publishing in the **Federal Register**, corresponding by mail, talking by telephone and traveling to hearings and meetings. This same technology also enables interested parties to review public comments without having to travel to Washington, D.C. or file Freedom of Information Act requests. For example, the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunication and Information Administration recently used electronic mail to gather responses to a report on reallocating the Federal radio spectrum. The report was placed on-line and was made available through an electronic bulletin board system and via the Internet. Sixty organizations responded to the report. These sixty responses were then placed on-line for everyone to see and discuss.

A related effort is making available to the public the rules and regulations they are expected to follow. Also relevant are legislative materials and supporting documents, such as Congressional committee reports. The ultimate issue is whether the National Information Infrastructure can make it possible, more practical, and more attractive for Americans to participate in government at all levels.

Questions regarding participatory democracy. As more of us utilize information technology to participate in governmental processes will the volume become overwhelming? How do we balance the level of involvement with expectations and governments' ability to deliver? What are the best strategies for

seeing that citizens have access to the rules, regulations and related information needed to comply with government requirements and how can we improve their ability to participate in the rulemaking process?

Technology: How the Information Infrastructure of Electronic Government Will Work

We are in an era of technological upheaval—the information age. The advances in information technologies of all types have caused businesses to rethink the way they operate and governments to reinvent the way they do business. The future look of government is what this electronic meeting is all about. How will it work for Americans?

In the other topical discussion areas, we are talking about what electronic governments will do and generally how it will be done. Here, it is more what they will do it with—the technological tools to accomplish the tasks of governing.

The Information Infrastructure Task Force, a Federal government body, along with the Information Infrastructure Advisory Council, made up of representatives of State and local governments, industry, and academia, are also looking at the face of future governments. They are looking at issues such as the need for telecommunications reform, security matters, privacy, reliability and vulnerability, intellectual property rights, health issues and the technologies themselves.

Interoperability, the ability to communicate with one another, is a critical goal for future governments. Federal, State, Tribal and local agencies must be able to interact instantly and effectively.

Questions regarding the technology of electronic government. What will be the role of the Internet or its progeny? What criteria should be used for selecting the appropriate technology for a given function or the delivery of particular services? Does interoperability of governmental systems cause concerns? What if some government agencies systems aren't interoperable or they can't afford a system at all? Will their citizen customers suffer as a result? Will the information they use be as accurate and timely as necessary? What about reliability? We know it is essential, but won't technological vulnerabilities still exist? Will governments become so dependent on the use of advanced technologies that they will be unable to function if the system fails during an emergency?

Electronic Availability and Electronic Open Meeting

General: This document, along with the other documents referenced herein, are available by any HTML viewer, such as Mosaic or Netscape, at: URL:<http://meeting.fedworld.gov>, or via FTP from meeting.fedworld.gov

For those with electronic mail access who wish to find out more about the open meeting, send a blank electronic mail message to: info@meeting.fedworld.gov This will result in delivery of a more detailed description of the electronic open meeting.

Public Access Sites: A primary goal of the meeting is to enable as many Americans as possible to participate. This includes people who do not have a computer with a modem, or access to the Internet. In order to permit their participation, a number of "Public Access Sites" have been established. To either locate the nearest Public Access Site, or to order a list of all Public Access Sites, call the GPO Access Support Team at (202) 512-1530 or, for the duration of the meeting, (800) 881-6842.

Participation options: It is possible to participate in the electronic open meeting in four ways depending upon desired level of interaction—electronic mail of comments, subscription to a "Listserv," subscribing to a "Usenet" newsgroup, and accessing the open meeting homepage via an HTML viewer, such as "Mosaic" or "Netscape".

Electronic mail of comments—This is the easiest way to participate in the open meeting. However, interaction will be limited. Choosing one of the options below is recommended.

Subscribing to a Mailing List—Subscribing to a mailing list allows more interactive participation in the meeting. When one subscribes to a mailing list, one receives all the mail messages which everyone posts to the mailing list. It is much like putting a note on a bulletin board. However, instead of having to go to the bulletin board to look for new messages, the bulletin board comes to you in the form of electronic mail. To subscribe to the National Electronic Open Meeting mailing list, send an e-mail to: join@meeting.fedworld.gov

The text of the e-mail message should be:

subscribe topic your __ name
where the first word of the message must be the word "subscribe," the second word of the message must be the topic acronym, and the last two words of the message must be your name. The topic acronyms are: