



Written Statement of Marcia Van Wagner
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The Council of the City of New York
Committee on Technology in Government

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The Citizens Budget Commission is pleased to offer its testimony on the issue of requiring the department of information technology and telecommunications to develop a planning system for technology and telecommunications.

CBC is a strong proponent of the strategic use of technology in the provision of government services. We have applauded the use of Comstat and similar systems to use information strategically because we know that better use of technology can lead to improved service delivery and in many cases lower costs. Our report on procurement reform, for example, showed how the City's paper-driven and uncoordinated system for procurement of goods was costing taxpayers millions of dollars per year in excess labor costs, delays, and reduced competition.

Government managers know how powerful information technology and telecommunications can be as well. They see how IT upgrades can increase the productivity of their employees and allow them to do more with less. Unfortunately, in the past technology was frequently implemented in an uncoordinated fashion, leading to technological incompatibilities among agencies, a lack of budgetary coordination, and other problems. These issues presumably formed the impetus behind Mayor Giuliani's Executive Order creating the New York City Technology Steering Committee. That Committee was charged with development and oversight of the City's technology deployment. It was made up of the Directors of the Office of Information Technology and Telecommunications, Management and Budget, and Operations.

We think that a planning and oversight approach such as proposed the Council's legislation makes sense. The background paper prepared by Committee staff for this hearing lays out many of the advantages of strategic planning in the technology arena and I will not repeat them here.

However, I think that the Council has made an omission in its proposal that should be rectified. A plan without a budget is never more than a plan. The mandatory technology plans should be part of the budgeting process and should establish the relationship between technology investments and improved or more efficient service delivery.

Thank you for inviting our testimony.