

Testimony by Mr. Haywood Talcove
Vice President, Public Sector Americas, Juniper Networks, Inc.
Before the House Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service
and the District of Columbia

November 6, 2007

Chairman Davis and members of the Committee, it is a great privilege to testify before you today on the pressing need for policies that help promote and enable telework and remote access across the federal government.

Once federal agencies are able to implement telework on a routine basis, the practice will radically alter in a very real way how all facets of government — from how the federal government conducts business, to how it protects and serves citizens, to how it promotes good stewardship of the environment.

As an example, let's start with the coming retirement tsunami that agencies across government are facing.

In four short years, a shift in the labor force will occur, as the front edge of the boomer generation turns 65. This shift will have a significant impact on both the public and private sectors.

But its repercussions will perhaps be felt nowhere more keenly than in federal agencies. Federal agencies are more exposed to this shift than is the private sector, due to the unique effects that a sudden and continuous brain drain from agency ranks will have on their ability to provide critical services to citizens.

As all of us — government and industry alike — come to grips with the prospect of a mass exodus of experience and talent in the next few years, telework stands as the one viable and implementable practice that can help stem this trend.

Telework achieves this goal by empowering the federal government's most important asset — its people.

The benefits of telework are clear.

Telework promotes efficiency. It benefits the federal government by boosting worker productivity through instant, highly secure remote access to government networks and resources that workers need to do their jobs.

Telework is an attrition remedy. The ability to telework acts as an incentive that makes working past retirement age both feasible and attractive for government employees who are needed to train and mentor the next generation of agency staff who will replace them.

Telework is both a motivational tool and a recruitment tool. Telework benefits government agencies by empowering employees to balance work and family life, which can result in lower rates of absenteeism and better retention. And, as you know, the ability to reconcile family with work is often cited by prospective employees as an important factor in their choice of employer. Amid fierce competition from the private

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sector for the best and brightest talent, the federal government must leverage every benefit it can offer.

Beyond the human capital benefits of telework, it is vitally important to highlight the important role telework plays in Homeland Security and government continuity of operations.

The past several years — marked by man-made and natural calamities such as the terrorist attacks of September 11th, Hurricane Katrina, the Minnesota bridge collapse and the Southern California wildfires — have demonstrated like few other periods in recent history, the importance of Continuity of Operations and emergency preparedness.

It is at times like these that citizens rely on government most and expect government to deliver the needed service and support required to make it through challenging times. For government to respond in a timely manner, it must equip essential government employees with the tools necessary to communicate and execute their responsibilities 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

To achieve this goal, agencies must know which critical operations to prioritize during a disruptive event. They also must have the infrastructure in place to permit critical employees to work remotely from home or at alternate sites.

Technology is not a barrier to telework.

The cornerstone of a round-the-clock Continuity of Operations capabilities is a secure, cost-effective high-performance communications infrastructure that can deliver instant, highly secure access information and resources to every remote user who has the need—where and when they need it.

Off-the-shelf technology already exists to support secure teleworking by employees: Secure Sockets Layer/Virtual Private Networks (SSL/VPNs) provide connectivity to IT assets so that employees can securely access agency resources from virtually any location, using a variety of devices.

More to the point, because disruptions or disasters may strike at any moment, the best way to ensure that federal workers are prepared for continuity of government is to promote and practice telework as part of everyday agency operations.

That way, government IT managers can solve network problems in an ongoing fashion, continually improving and fine tuning agencies' IT infrastructure to ensure network resiliency while policing network access and guarding against viruses, intrusions and other breaches.

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Perhaps of all the advantages of telework, it is the environmental benefit that most impacts every citizen in his or her everyday existence.

Most, if not all, of us here in this chamber have suffered through the maddening experience of inching along — or idling, as the case may be — in Washington area traffic congestion.

Worse still, many in this chamber also suffer from allergies caused or aggravated by auto and other emissions pumped into the atmosphere.

Just consider for a moment how much cleaner the air would be if federal agencies in this region alone promoted regular telework among their employees. Now, consider the man-hours saved and the aggravation spared if telework were more widely practiced.

Of course, telework is not a magic bullet for all that ails the environment. What it is, though, represents a way for us to cut commute times, lessen congestion and decrease the country's dependence on non-renewable and foreign sources of energy.

Yet, despite all the benefits of telework I have outlined today, some federal agencies have been slow to adopt and enable the practice.

According to recent government and industry reports, overall rates of telework in agencies still remain low.

To get a better sense of government's plans for and current telework capabilities, Juniper Networks commissioned a third party to poll more than 1,400 government employees. The survey revealed most notably that:

- While nearly 8 in 10 respondents — 79% — said their agency allows telework in some form, less than 3 in 10 — 28% — actually do telework on a routine basis (defined as more than 20% of the time or at least one day of the week).
Reference supporting slide 12.
- Additionally, although few government respondents — 12% — reported that their agencies have telework training programs, the good news is that a majority — 51% — said their agencies have dedicated staff to support telework, a critical COOP component.
Reference supporting slides 13 and 14.

Critical employees are, of course, not distributed equally across all federal agencies, which may account for part of the gap between agencies that have been leaders in implementing telework capabilities and those that are not.

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Nevertheless, the finding of overall progress toward telework implementation in federal agencies is clear. They well understand the critical link between telework and COOP.

In conclusion, we at Juniper Networks recognize that implementing and promoting telework policies throughout the federal government is — and will continue to be — a daunting, though not futile, task. Enabling and promoting the practice of telework directly impacts how government does business, how it protects and serves citizens, and how it helps care for the environment.

Juniper Networks is a long-standing proponent of telework. That is why we support Congressional action that encourages federal agencies to move aggressively toward adoption and routine use of telework.

However, some agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and the General Services Administration (GSA), are leading the way with infrastructure already in place to enable telework or ambitious plans to have half of eligible employees teleworking at least one day a week by 2010.

Private industry looks forward to helping the federal government in every way possible as it moves toward the goal of enabling telework for all critical employees.

At this time, I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

On behalf of Juniper Networks, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Committee today.