

**TESTIMONY OF DAVID S. FERRIERO
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**BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INFORMATION POLICY, CENSUS AND NATIONAL ARCHIVES**

**OF THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM**

**ON
“FEDERAL ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT: A STATUS REPORT”**

JUNE 17, 2010

Chairman Clay, Ranking Member McHenry, and members of the Subcommittee, I am David S. Ferriero, Archivist of the United States. Thank you for providing the opportunity for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to testify about government-wide Federal records management and the central role that records management plays in the accomplishment of the mission of the National Archives.

The backbone of a transparent and accountable Government is good records management. To put it simply, the Government cannot be open or accountable if it does not preserve – and cannot find – its records.

NARA believes that across the Federal Government agencies can do more to fulfill their records management responsibilities, particularly with regard to the exponential growth in electronic records.

NARA’s records management approach is grounded in three principles:

- Federal agencies must economically and effectively create and manage records necessary to meet business needs
- Federal records must be kept long enough to protect rights and assure accountability, and
- Federal records of archival value must be preserved and made available by the National Archives for future generations.

Most Federal agencies need to do a more effective job managing their records and other information assets to meet their business needs; to protect rights or assure accountability for the citizen or the Federal government; and to ensure records that document the national experience are preserved and made available for future generations in the National Archives.

Agency heads and senior leaders must work with NARA, the Office of Management and Budget, and the General Services Administration, as well as with groups like the Chief Information

Officers (CIO) Council, the Federal Records Council, and the Federal Web Managers Community to develop the Information Technology (IT) tools necessary to manage electronic records in cost effective ways.

The technical challenges associated with developing the IT tools for electronic records management are not insignificant; the lack of effective tools today is due in part because heads of agencies and senior leaders across the Federal government have not been held accountable in meaningful ways for meeting their Federal records and information management obligations. The Federal Government spends \$80 billion annually on information technology, most – if not all – of which create or receive Federal records in some form. Developing cost effective electronic records management tools that work – and then integrating them into agency IT systems – is essential to managing this national asset.

Over the past ten years, NARA has developed a substantial body of electronic records management policy and guidance. The policy includes the first full revision of Federal records management regulations in nearly 25 years; the endorsement for civilian agency use of Department of Defense Electronic Records Management Application (RMA) Design Criteria Standard; the development of the Records Management Profile and associated tools for use by Federal agency CIOs to help them think about and account for records management in enterprise architectures; and the issuance of Federal records management guidance on topics such as managing web records, managing records in a multi-agency environment, and using e-mail archiving applications to store and manage Federal records. All of our electronic records management policy and guidance documents can be found at www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/.

In the past 18 to 24 months, NARA has been much more assertive in exercising its statutory authorities in this area and reporting on its activities. However, work remains to be done by both NARA and the Federal agencies in creating, preserving, and making available the electronic Federal records that are part of the nation's documentary heritage.

Our nation's historical record hinges on the ability of each Federal agency to effectively manage their records. Heads of Agencies and senior leaders across the Federal Government need to understand that the records and information they and their organizations are creating are national assets that must be effectively managed and secured so that the public can be assured of the authenticity of the record. Heads of Agencies and senior leaders need to be held accountable for managing these assets. Not only is it required by law in the Federal Records Act; effective records management – adequate and proper documentation of the Federal government's activities and transactions – is good government and a necessary condition of an open government.

To more fully explain our concerns in the electronic environment, my colleague Paul Wester, Director of Modern Records Programs at NARA, will discuss the results of two recent analyses completed by NARA's National Records Management Program.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.