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NEWS

NEW YORK STATE ISSUES COMPREHENSIVE E-RECORDS STUDY ON OPENNESS Report Makes Recommendations for Improved Electronic Document Creation and Preservation

Albany, NY (May 21, 2008) – The New York State Office for Technology and the New York State Archives, a program of the State Education Department, issued a report today that examines how the state can provide choice, interoperability and vendor neutrality in electronic document creation while ensuring electronic records are preserved and remain accessible. “*A Strategy for Openness: Enhancing E-Records Access in New York State*” makes recommendations to promote openness and transparency aimed at ensuring public records remain free from being locked into proprietary systems and software applications.

“As the state continues to conduct more and more business electronically, the importance of preserving e-records for historical reference is paramount,” said Dr. Melodie Mayberry-Stewart, New York Chief Information Officer and Director of the Office for Technology and co-sponsor of the study group, with Christine Ward, State Archivist. “This report is the first step to improve openness in records retention for the state and we expect additional recommendations for technical standards to evolve as we continue on down the openness path,” said Mayberry-Stewart.

“The report represents the best thinking of an outstanding team of individuals from several state agencies that focused its extensive experience and expertise to address a vital and complex issue facing state government operations. The recommendations in this report will help the state ensure that government electronic records are preserved and accessible to the public,” said State Archivist Christine W. Ward.

Assemblywoman RoAnn Destito, Chair of the Governmental Operations Committee, championed a bill in 2007 that was signed into law requiring the state Office for Technology to study how electronic documents and the mechanisms and processes for obtaining access to and reading electronic data can be created, maintained, exchanged and preserved.

“I am very pleased that this study will lead to a more transparent and effective state government especially as it relates to new technology and the future of electronic documents,” Assemblywoman RoAnn M. Destito (D/WF – Rome) explained. “I commend the Office for Technology, the State Archives, and all their partners for a thorough study, and I look forward to reading their

recommendations. I have been urging legislative action to address this issue, and hopefully, this is the catalyst that leads to a more open and efficient government.”

The report recommends establishing a statewide, cross-government Electronics Records Committee to address, in a formal, long-term and collaborative manner, all aspects of electronic record creation, management and preservation. The committee would facilitate state agency adoption, place the vendor community on notice of the state’s strategic direction and long-term commitment for technology openness, and ensure this commitment is institutionalized throughout the state enterprise and survives government leadership transitions. Another recommendation suggests the committee develops and publishes a final open records policy, and begins issuing a series of standards and guidelines for implementing the policy.

A workgroup was formed to conduct the research and write the report. The workgroup was comprised of leadership from the New York State Office of the Chief Information Officer and Office for Technology, New York State Department of Education/New York State Archives, Office of the New York State Attorney General, Office of the New York State Comptroller, New York State Historian, and the SUNY Center for Technology in Government. They examined policies from other states and nations, records management of the State Archives, the need for public access, the expected storage life of electronic documents, and the costs of implementation.

The workgroup solicited public and private comments regarding a strategy to provide more openness with documents. They received 114 public comments, which totaled 600 pages of comments. Approximately half (51%) of the responders were individuals, 22% of the responses came from commercial enterprises, 17% came from government entities, and 10% from non-profit organizations.

The full report is available on the New York State Office for Technology website at <http://www.oft.state.ny.us/Policy/ESRA/erecords-study.htm>.