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ABSTRACT

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OPEN GOVERNMENT

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- *The Administration's Open Government Initiative combines a commitment to democratic principles with an aggressive approach to using advanced technologies such as Web 2.0.*
- *The Open Government Directive of December 2009 has elicited plans from executive agencies to make information available, improve information quality, and institute cultures and policies for openness.*
- *The greatest challenge facing the OGI will be how to manage collaboration to help marshal knowledge and expertise wherever it may be found.*

Background: Open government is a democratic ideal that has taken on new visibility in the age of the Internet. During the early days of the Web, the Clinton White House put up a website that listed executive branch agencies and showed clearly which were hotlinked, putting pressure on laggard agencies to develop a public website. Since then many agencies have made extensive and productive use of the Web.

The Obama Administration announced an Open Government Initiative the day after the President's inauguration. The Initiative has three themes: transparency, participation, and collaboration – a reconfiguration of the more traditional trio of transparency, accountability, and participation. While the Initiative reflects a philosophical shift from certain Bush Administration practices, the initiative was also inspired by the prominent role that the Internet played in the Obama campaign and the Administration's commitment to innovation and technology savvy government. As promised, the President appointed Aneesh Chopra as Chief Technology Officer (who serves as Associate Director for Technology at OSTP), as well as a Chief Information Officer, Vivek Kundra, at OMB.

In December 2009, the President issued a directive to executive branch agencies that charged them with taking certain steps within 90 to 120 days, including:

- Publish government information online by making it available online in open formats
- Improve the quality of government information
- Create and institutionalize a culture of open government
- Create an enabling policy framework for open government

The inclusion of “collaboration” reflects the conviction of the Administration that the government can make effective use of Web 2.0 technologies to collaborate across agencies,

governments, and sectors in developing and managing knowledge. The peer-to-patent project at the Patent and Trademark Office has been the poster child for collaboration. Largely funded outside the government, the project drew on outside experts to help evaluate the novelty of patent applications.

This expansive view of government use of information technology raises questions about the need to revisit the legal framework for interacting with the federal government, such as the Paperwork Reduction Act, the Government in the Sunshine Act, the Freedom of Information Act, and the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

CCIA's position:

- CCIA believes that federal agencies should take advantage of state-of-the-art information technology in carrying out their missions, including interaction with the private sector and the public.
- CCIA supports the Open Government Initiative as a means of promoting democratic ideals and ensuring informed policy development.
- Government use of collaboration technologies should be explored as a way of enhancing the gathering, sharing, and validation of information and knowledge.