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Computer & Communications Industry Association

November 9, 2009

Via U.S. & Electronic Mail

Vivek Kundra
Federal Chief Information Officer
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
Room 269
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20502

Re: Open Source in Government Procurement

Dear Mr. Kundra:

On behalf of the Computer & Communications Industry Association (CCIA), I write to applaud the Administration's recent consideration of open source solutions for the computing needs of the federal government, such as the use of the Drupal content management system for Recovery.gov and Whitehouse.gov.

Open source software – software that can be used, copied, modified and redistributed by anyone – should be considered a valuable option in the IT marketplace and the modern IT ecosystem. Open source software is not only an important procurement option for the U.S. Government, it can also serve as a useful tool for engaging the public at large, as well as expert communities.

As a general principle, governments should choose software based on an analysis of the costs and benefits, not ideology. Open source solutions may not be the best option in all cases; the inherent advantages of open source software, such as the lack of up-front licensing costs and the ability to inspect and modify source code, often provide a strong case for adoption, but must be weighed against the advantages of traditionally-developed, proprietary software.

Other factors to be considered may include use of open standards, availability of maintenance and support, and whether the purpose for which software is procured is strategic rather than routine. For example, certain technology for engaging the public – whether in the form of voting technology or wikis – may instill greater confidence and trust if the code is open.

Since some strategic and policy considerations may be unfamiliar to the private sector, we encourage the Administration to promote a discussion of what factors should be taken into

account in government decisions about developing, acquiring, and using software – perhaps under the auspices of the Open Government Initiative.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if we can be of assistance to the Administration in this regard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Black". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Ed Black
President & CEO
Computer & Communications Industry Association

cc: Aneesh P. Chopra, Associate Director and Chief Technology Officer
Beth S. Noveck, Deputy Chief Technology Officer for Open Government