

## ***Electronic Government***

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During the years I chaired the Joint Commission on Technology and Science it became clear that science and technology would play a critical role in Virginia's economic future. That is why in 1997 I introduced legislation establishing a permanent Joint Commission on Technology and Science (JCOTS). I was the first chairman of JCOTS and maintained that position until I had to relinquish it with the change in party control of the House of Delegates. I continue to serve as a member of JCOTS.

From its very inception until today JCOTS has utilized technical advisory committees to assist with its work. With a broad mandate, JCOTS could never be expected to have legislative members with expertise in the many areas it studies. As annual work plans are agreed upon, technical advisory committees composed of experts, stakeholders and consumers are appointed to advise the Commission on particular aspects of issues it is studying. Membership on the technical advisory committees is sought after, and the expertise and points of view brought to the deliberations by these volunteers are invaluable to JCOTS and to the Commonwealth. Partisanship has never gotten in the way of its work.

A technical advisory committee helped JCOTS write Virginia's digital signature bill, one of the first in the Nation, that was passed without amendment and signed into law. Technical advisory committees also recommended that Virginia adopt UCITA, a uniform law on electronic commercial transactions, making the state in a controversial move one of the few to do so.

An important function of JCOTS has been both to prod and to encourage the executive branch in the use of technology for governmental functions. One of my personal interests has been to make government more responsive and more democratic by using technology. JCOTS closely monitored the executive branch and ensured that Virginia got through Y2K without incident. And JCOTS recommended that Virginia employ a Chief Information Officer before the governor came to the same conclusion.

Both Republican and Democratic governors have been cooperative, and technology issues provide the areas of greatest cooperation between the two branches of government. And Virginia's efforts with the use of technology have been recognized by several national awards including "Best State Web Portal in the Nation" by the Center for Digital Government and "One of the Top 12 E-government Programs in the World" by Balanced E-Government Award, Bertelsmann Foundation of Germany.

The House of Delegates placed such importance on the work of JCOTS that in its reorganization created a standing House Committee on Science and Technology which I co-chaired with Delegate Joe May of Loudoun County until the partisan realignment of the House. I continue to serve as a member of the House Committee on Science and Technology. Virginia will face many new challenges and opportunities with technology but is well positioned to respond thanks to JCOTS and its technical advisory committees and the House Committee on Science and Technology.

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