

NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
Assembly Budget Committee
Testimony – Adel Ebeid, Interim Chief Technology Officer
May 9, 2006

Good afternoon, Chairman Greenwald and members of the Assembly Budget Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Office of Information Technology's budget request for fiscal year 2007.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce the members of my management team here with me today: my two Deputies, Ron Stewart and Ray Hayling, and my Chief Fiscal Officer, Ann Timmons.

On March 15th, Governor Corzine asked me to assume responsibility for OIT. In addition to day-to-day responsibility for the central office, I was also asked to establish a new structure for the organization and set a foundation for a statewide technology assessment.

As an initial step, we have created a flatter management structure, eliminating a number of unclassified positions and lowering our salary costs by almost \$600,000. We have allocated a portion of those savings for training our front-line staff in using and supporting newer technologies.

We rebuilt the management team by negotiating several mobility assignments with our sister agencies. This way, we did not burden the OIT budget with additional operating expenses or any net increase in the state's payroll.

I want to recognize and thank Attorney General Farber, Treasurer Abelow, Commissioner Kolluri, and Acting Commissioner Hayman for their support. Members that makeup my management team today came from those departments. I want to be sure that their leadership and spirit of cooperation does not go unnoticed.

While we are revamping OIT's internal organizational structure, we are also engaged in weekly conference calls with Treasury, OMB, DPMC, and the Purchase Bureau to identify statewide cost saving opportunities. We are working together as we speak to implement many of those ideas.

Understanding OIT as both a leader and a former client, I am well aware of the difficulties facing the IT community. In addition to addressing the internal structure of OIT and potential areas for cost savings, we recognized the need to mend our relationship with the state agencies, our clients.

OIT now holds weekly meetings with representatives from the entire IT community. At these meetings, we began discussing the same issues that may have set us apart in the past – governance, shared technology resources, effective division of labor, and, most importantly, establishing an IT blue print to influence future direction and decisions.

These conversations are not easy, but the dialogue is necessary. The decisions and outcomes will make some uncomfortable, but they must happen for the good of the state and ultimately, the taxpayers. At the end of the day, I believe that the IT community is at its best when everyone is working together toward a common goal.

In the past 30 days, I have focused my energies on improving communications, both internally and externally. We have engaged all agency IT directors and most cabinet members in a dialogue about the future of IT in the State of New Jersey.

Forward thinking government leaders understand that the value of information technology is not in the hardware, software, or wiring. The value of IT is in helping us deliver the best possible service to our customers and constituents at the least cost possible to the state and taxpayers.

IT is deeply woven into the fabric of our government operations. It can be the single best opportunity to allow government leaders to challenge the status quo and use technology as a catalyst to reform how each of us delivers services to our customers.

Someone once said, "If you don't know where you are, a map won't help. And, if you don't where you are going any road will take you there."

To baseline where we are today as an IT community, we have asked each department for an inventory of their IT projects, systems, and staff. At the end of this exercise, we will end up with a fact-based, single version of the truth, of today's IT environment.

At the same time, we are collecting information from other states who may be considered "best in class" for IT service delivery, so we can benchmark our acquisition and use of IT against their models. This collection of data will give us the ability to build the IT strategic direction for the future.

OIT and the IT community are not the responsibility of a single individual; every cabinet member, agency IT director, and leaders of different branches of government must be part of the solution.

I would like to conclude by commending the IT employees statewide for the outstanding job they have done to keep government running, and especially OIT for stepping up to the plate during this time of transition.

Thank you, Chairman Greenwald and members of the Committee. At this time I welcome any questions you may have.