Thank you, Larry Olson. I am honored to be here with the men and women who are transforming government through the power of technology. I especially want to thank the Center for Digital Government for sponsoring this event, because the conversation that takes place here is essential to advancing the cause of good government. You may not always get the credit directly, but let me tell you there are millions of Texas who will be forever grateful to the person in this room who came up with the idea for online driver’s license renewal.

Now, some of you may be wondering why a governor who grew up on a cotton farm and got a degree in animal science was asked to speak to a group of technology officers from around the world. Thankfully for you and me both, it’s not to share my thoughts on the best strategy for building a scalable commodity procurement infrastructure. The reason I am here is because in Texas, we believe that government’s primary objective is to work effectively and efficiently, both for the citizens who utilize government services and the taxpayers who foot the bill. And as a state with some 23 million residents, and a population that is projected to double in a few short decades, we recognize that the only way to meet that goal is by maximizing the use of technology.

We live in a world that is made virtually borderless by the Internet, where people from across the globe can share information and ideas in an instant, and citizens expect their government to keep pace with the changing times. That is why government must continually ask itself a few fundamental questions: how can we save citizens time and money, how can we make critical services more accessible, and how can we cut through bureaucratic red tape to make life that much easier. That continues to be the focus of our technology related efforts.

One of our most important goals has been to consolidate and share services whenever possible. A recent example is an e-mail and messaging managed service contract that will lower government costs an average of 45 percent. It’s structured on a pay-per-use basis, so that government at all levels can choose the options that best fit their needs. And in addition to significant cost savings, it will provide added security, performance guarantees, disaster recovery services, and increased functionality for public sector entities. We are also working to consolidate the 30 data centers across state agencies to save taxpayer dollars. We are concentrating on modernizing infrastructure, improving security and focusing agency resources on core...
missions.

I’m proud to say that the project is on schedule thanks to the collaborative work across multiple state agencies and at all levels of state government. I am particularly proud of the steps Texas has taken to bring the next wave of Internet technology to our institutions of higher learning. In 2004, the state committed $10 million to help connect 33 universities through a new high-speed fiber optic network, allowing them to share massive amounts of data, better compete for research dollars, and enable the development of revolutionary Internet applications that will benefit academia, industry and the public. And we are also leveraging the buying power of the state in technology purchases. This year, we will spend three quarters of a billion dollars through our cooperative contracts program that helps all levels of government leverage tax dollars for maximum effect. But despite the progress Texas and other states have made, the potential to revolutionize government through technology will always be without limit. Greater efficiencies can always be found, if for no other reason than technology will always advance. And every great leap forward in technology must be followed closely by government’s own great leap.

That is why you are here. Texas is thankful for the work you do to foster innovation, we appreciate your being here to share and develop the ideas that can transform governments the world over, and we are proud to host you during your stay in the Lone Star State. Thank you, and may God bless you.