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Testimony
Multimedia
Contacts
En Español

Secretary Napolitano Unveils DHS' Open Government Plan

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Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano today unveiled the Department's Open Government plan—leveraging public input to enhance transparency, public participation and collaboration as part of the Obama administration's Open Government Initiative.

"Openness and transparency between DHS and the public are critical to our security mission," said Secretary Napolitano. "This plan is a critical step towards strengthening public engagement to allow citizens to take a more active role in the safety of their communities."

The development of DHS' Open Government Plan, viewable at www.dhs.gov/open, focused on utilizing public feedback to better share important and timely information with federal, state, local and tribal partners, private sector organizations and individual citizens.

A key component of the plan is the expansion of "Virtual USA"—an innovative information-sharing initiative developed in collaboration with the emergency response community and state and local governments across the nation to enhance communication between federal, state, local and tribal first responders during emergencies. DHS launched "Virtual USA" on Dec. 9, 2009, following a successful pilot program.

In addition, the plan calls for reducing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request backlogs—already decreased by 81 percent over the past four years—by a minimum of 15 percent each year in order to increase transparency, exceeding the government-wide goal of 10 percent annually.

The plan also highlights the ongoing efforts of the Department to develop and support state and local fusion centers—critical assets in preventing crime and terrorism in communities across the country through two-way intelligence and information sharing between DHS and the rest of the federal government and our state, local, tribal and territorial law enforcement partners.

On Dec. 8, 2009, President Obama and the Office of Management and Budget issued the Open Government Directive to begin breaking down long-standing barriers between the federal government and the people it serves, and instructed agencies to take immediate, specific steps to open their doors and data to the American people.

For more information, visit www.dhs.gov/open.

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