

Coalition Says New Massachusetts Open Standards Rule Fails to Ensure Best Value for Taxpayers on Software Procurements

The following statement may be attributed to Bob Kramer, Executive Director of the Initiative for Software Choice (ISC):

Washington, DC, January 15, 2004 – “While the Romney administration has made significant strides since announcing its ‘freeware’ initiative in September, the open standards software procurement rule as announced late Monday still does not give the best taxpayer value. We strongly support procurement guidance that focuses on total life-cycle analysis, but are disappointed that the rule still contains bias against proprietary solutions, thus precluding a full and fair analysis of all options. That noted, we remain hopeful that any ambiguities within the rule which harm taxpayers and Massachusetts businesses will be clarified before the rule’s final implementation.

“Chief among our concerns:

- The state’s policy preference for open standards appears to be a proxy for open-source-only software acquisitions, especially as it pertains to –
 - The meaning of open standards, which have been defined as being developed only through ‘open communities’, potentially excluding proprietary developers in the standards-setting process; and
 - The rule’s contention of the implied ‘portability’ and ‘build once, use many times’ approach of open standards-based solutions, which strongly imply the exclusive use of ‘freely distributable’ (i.e., non-proprietary) solutions.
- The rule’s overall ambiguities and tone may, in a practical sense, lead proprietary software developers and solution providers to question whether to bid on state IT projects at all.

“Should any of these points prove true, in our determination the Bay State will have pushed through a ‘preference’ policy to the detriment of its own administration, taxpayers, and IT industry. Quite simply, such a policy will leave the Commonwealth with less IT choices, fewer available solution providers, increased costs, and poorer state services, not to mention the potential for state-based IT business closures, lost jobs, and the diminution of status as the nation’s premier digital economy.

“As we move forward, we pledge our support to work with the Romney administration in order that the governor’s new rule may not, in effect or in tone, favor any particular model of software development, thus benefiting all stakeholders in this process.”

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About the ISC

The Initiative for Software Choice (ISC) is global coalition of large and small companies committed to advancing the concept that multiple competing software markets should be allowed to develop and flourish unimpeded by government preference or mandate. For more information, please see us on the web at www.softwarechoice.org.

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