

Microsoft: Massachusetts OpenDocument Proposal Opposition Letter 1
Tuesday, January 31, 2006
Word Count:

The Honorable Mitt Romney
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House
Boston, MA 02133

September 19, 2005

Dear Governor Romney,

As you know, Secretary Eric Kriss and CIO Peter Quinn are proposing a technology move that would establish OpenDocument as the standard and required document format for all Commonwealth agencies. The premise of this move is very commendable as it seeks to create long-term solutions to the challenges of archiving, storing and retrieving data and documents in a format that is open and interoperable.

The XML technology that OpenDocument utilizes has been touted as the basic reason for this move and as the fundamental engine for providing ongoing data and technology solutions. Again, a concept that is to be applauded and encouraged from my perspective.

However, before your Administration aggressively moves down the path of establishing OpenDocument you may very well want to consider that fact that XML based technologies are already being utilized in the Commonwealth. Additionally, they are being utilized in a far superior manner than what OpenDocument could deliver.

XML, in many ways, is like the combustion engine. Clearly a VW Bug (even the new ones) uses the concepts and technologies of a combustion engine significantly differently than does a Ferrari. Similarly, XML technologies employed by software products currently being used by the Commonwealth run faster, smoother, and with greater stability than products that use the OpenDocument format. They do this because they have been around longer, have more RD funds invested in them, and are well known to the Commonwealth's employees. In contrast, OpenDocument formats are new, untested and tend to be unstable.

Best of all, software currently being used already meets open format and interoperability standards established by the Commonwealth. So, if the solution is already on hand, the glaring question is: Why go to the time and expense of conversion? It simply does not make sense. Therefore, I would encourage you to reject the proposal and focus on making better use of what you already have.

Sincerely,