

# **ALLIANCE FOR BUILDING REGULATORY REFORM IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

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## **STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS FLAGS REGULATORY STREAMLINING & IT IN PUBLIC SAFETY & CONSTRUCTION PROCESSES - National Recognition for the Streamlining Imperative – Increasing the Nation’s Value Proposition**

**Washington, D.C. – February 22, 2011** - President Barak Obama in the “rebuilding America” portion of last month’s State of the Union Address cited one of the Alliance for Building Regulatory Reform in the Digital Age’s major efforts to strengthen both disaster resiliency and stimulate economic recovery. “It’s about connecting every part of America to the Digital Age... It’s about a firefighter who can download the design of a burning building onto a handheld device.”

This technology currently is being put in place in the cities of Portland, Maine for their firefighters under a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and in Bend, Oregon, where under the leadership of that community’s building department and office of the mayor, the jurisdiction makes use of IT processes throughout the building regulatory process.

The above concept was originally put forth in Robert Wible’s 2003 speech, “Standing at the Foot of the Tower of Babel,” delivered at a post-9-11 Homeland Security Conference hosted by McGraw-Hill publications in Washington, D.C.. Since 2008 a handful of jurisdictions have been acquiring electronic plan review technology and developing secure databases of electronic as-built plans that can be downloaded to laptops and other mobile devices by first responders as they roll up on a disaster site. This technology enables first responders to have up to date knowledge of the layout of a building and key structural and fire safety information rather than relying as they have in the past upon having static notebook on iconic and other key structures in the jurisdiction.

This streamlining and IT technology, however, was not the only reference within the State of the Union address to areas of relevance to the Alliance’s work.

In addition to the above, three other of the President’s six major theme’s in his “Winning the Future,” January 25<sup>th</sup> State of the Union Address, are supported by regulatory streamlining and application of information technology to the nation’s regulatory and construction processes. Those three themes are – Rebuilding America – Reducing Barriers to Growth and More Efficiency in Government.

### **Rebuilding America**

While the Federal government (and numerous state and local governments) have been calling for, and in some cases providing economic stimulus funding to support renovations in the nation’s aging

infrastructure , significant percentages of those funds have been wasted by moving those projects through inefficient regulatory systems that take as much as 50% - 70% more time to process than those now in place in jurisdictions that have streamlined their process and are using information technology. Jurisdictions using electronic plan review technology, for example have reduced their plan review times from 16 weeks down to just 8 for commercial building renovations. Renovations and new construction for replicable buildings using the Alliance -FIATECH supported International Code Council Guideline for Replicable Buildings have reduced plan approval times for such structures in California from 24 weeks down to 8 ½. Target Corporation in demonstrating the Guideline in four states across the country is saving approximately \$100,000 in plan review costs per store.

### **Barriers to Growth**

Helping jurisdictions identify and eliminate or reduce areas of regulatory overlap and duplication conducted by the Alliance has helped some communities reduce construction project and building oversight reviews by 50%. An Alliance project being considered in California will help that state identify which regulations governing housing should be suspended, modified, strengthened or reduced to speed disaster response and recovery times in the wake of a catastrophic disaster.

### **More Efficiency**

Sharing Streamlining Toolkits, Guides and White Papers the Alliance through Robert Wible & Associates has helped state and local governments identify and remove regulatory barriers and identify and obtain information technology to make their regulatory systems both more effective and efficient. Tools such as electronic plan review are helping communities with fewer building department staff get the plan reviews for new hotels and other structures done in 60% less time than traditional paper plan reviews.

This effort is helping jurisdictions get new buildings open, hiring employees and on the tax rolls sooner (in some cases up to three months sooner) than under their previous systems. Such efforts are drawing new construction to these communities and stimulating their economic revitalization.

### **ANOTHER NATIONAL CALL FOR GREATER EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY**

All of the above needs to streamline and apply IT to government processes were echoed by IBM President Samuel Palmisano and DELL CEO Michael Dell during their February 2, 2011 presentation at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C. on how to save the US government a \$ trillion each year in waste and have government help address the nation's competitiveness issue.

In their two hour presentation, both speakers noted the vital importance of the Federal (and by inference state and local governments) to eliminate or at least reduce areas of regulatory overlap and conflict and wherever appropriate apply information technology to increase both government effectiveness and efficiency.

President Palmisano noted that in the years immediately ahead the Federal government (White House, Congress & Federal Agencies) must ask the questions – “Why would we (anyone – a US or foreign firm) invest in the United States? What is the Value Proposition for investing here? What do we need to do to increase that value proposition and attract to our nation the best people and the best capital?”

The work being done to streamline and make our government more effective and efficient is a major part of increasing our nation’s and every community’s “value proposition.”

### **The Streamlining Imperative**

While regulatory efficiency has always been a good idea, the nation’s deep recession and need to assure the nation’s economic competitiveness in the global economy has moved it from being just a good idea into a national (and local) imperative; an imperative that now has proven tools at its disposal to bring about meaningful savings in time and manpower. In the past there has been incredible inertia to overcome at all levels of government to streamlining and increased efficiency. But at this juncture consider that there are the following unique pressures on all the Federal, state and local governments to:

- Reboot the local economy
- Provide more jobs, end contraction – stimulate growth
- Same time continue to provide basic services with greater efficiency and quality with reduced staffing resources
- Do so without raising taxes!

### **Join in Supporting Streamlining and Effective Use of Information Technology**

Elected officials at the Federal, state and local levels; representatives from the construction industry, building owners and developers can contact the Alliance and access a wide range of support materials that will enable them to take actions to support both President Obama’s call to “Winning the Future,” and IBM and Dell’s leaders call for reducing eliminating government inefficiency and increasing the “value proposition” of investing in America.

How? Participate in one or more of the following three upcoming Streamlining presentations and visit the Alliance’s two website locations to gain more information and download streamlining materials.

## **Upcoming Presentations**

In March and April, Alliance founder, Robert Wible will be speaking about the Streamlining Imperative in three national conferences. March 2, 2011, Mr. Wible will chair a panel on “How Planning, Codes and Standards Can Help the Disaster Mitigation Process” at the McGraw-Hill “Mitigating Disaster Through Design & Construction” conference at the Renaissance Washington, D.C. DuPont Circle Hotel. Among the Streamlining Imperatives Mr. Wible will address in his opening remarks are the need for developing a Uniform approach to Code & Standards changes to better coordinate and make more coherent such diverse national initiatives as energy conservation, sustainability, environmental protection and increased disaster resiliency.

April 7, at the Engineering News Record “Top 25 News Makers Awards luncheon in New York City, Mr. Wible in his award acceptance address will provide details on savings to the nation’s construction industry, government and the public from regulatory streamlining and IT.

April 19, 2011 at the FIATECH Technology Conference and Showcase in Chandler, AZ, the FIATECH Streamlining project will share details of its effort to further enhance government regulatory efficiency through the development with the International Code Council of an automated electronic plan checking tool.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE STREAMLINING INITIATIVES MENTIONED IN THIS RELEASE**

### **CONTACT:**

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The Alliance for Building Regulatory Reform in the Digital Age was formed in June, 2001 at the National Governors Association and is a public-private partnership to help make government more effective and efficient through streamlining and (where appropriate) the use of information technology. Alliance activities are run through Robert Wible & Associates and through FIATECH a consortium of capital industry facility firms, colleges and universities affiliated with the University of Texas.

The Alliance’s work is not about regulatory abandonment but about improving the effectiveness and efficiency of government.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION /AWARDS FOR ALLIANCE ACTIVITIES – STREAMLINING THE NATION’S  
BUILDING REGULATORY PROCESS