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## **GPO TESTIFIES ON OMB PRINTING PROPOSAL**

GPO appeared July 10 at a hearing of the Joint Committee on Printing (JCP) that had been called to review the recent OMB proposal authorizing executive branch agencies to produce or procure their own printing. Current Federal law generally requires all agency printing to be done by GPO.

Testifying before the JCP were OMB Director Mitchell E. Daniels; Public Printer Michael F. DiMario; Benjamin Y. Cooper, Executive Vice President of the Printing Industries of America, Inc.; William J. Boarman, Vice President, Communications Workers of America; and Julia F. Wallace, Head, Government Publications Library of the University of Minnesota, on behalf of the American Library Association, the American Association of Law Libraries, the Association of Research Libraries, and the Medical Library Association.

While OMB Director Daniels defended his agency's plan, other witnesses found fault with it. PIA's Cooper said, "The solution proposed by OMB is not likely to serve the taxpayer well," "does not serve the printing industry," and "may not actually help the agencies." The CWA's Boarman said OMB's proposals "to splinter GPO's functions...are a serious threat...to providing adequate information to assure a well-informed electorate." Speaking for the library community, Wallace said OMB's directive "will further erode the Federal Depository Library Program...resulting in a loss of access by the American public to their Government information."

Public Printer DiMario provided extensive testimony on the weaknesses in OMB's proposal, noting he had directed the same criticisms at a similar proposal by former Vice President Gore's "reinventing Government" initiative. "This is not a political issue," said DiMario. "It's a question of how best to apply the Government's limited, taxpayer-financed resources to achieving the lowest possible cost in printing services and the broadest, most equitable dissemination of Government information to the public."

He dismissed OMB's claim that agencies are not constitutionally required to use GPO, saying, "In my view, unless or until Congress or a Federal court with appropriate jurisdiction changes Title 44, the law requiring agencies to use GPO remains in effect."

DiMario expressed concern that OMB's proposal to decentralize printing could increase Government printing costs over current levels by as much as \$200 million annually, significantly harm the ability of private sector printers to win Government contracts, and adversely impact public access to Government information through 1,300 Federal depository libraries nationwide.

He noted the savings that are achieved annually by GPO's Printing Procurement Program, working in partnership with nearly 16,000 private sector printers, more than 70% of whom are small businesses. He cited specific examples of significant savings achieved both on large, complex contracts and small printing jobs. He also offered to address problems with any executive printing contracts that OMB wished to refer to GPO.

DiMario specifically rebutted OMB's claim that GPO is a "monopoly," pointing out that many agencies have their own legal authority to print and that there are "an untold number" of in-house printing and duplicating operations throughout the executive branch. He also pointed to a recent, \$1.5 million management analysis of GPO by Booz-Allen and Hamilton, Inc., which found "universal support" in the executive branch for GPO's printing procurement program. Booz-Allen reported that "agencies viewed this service that GPO provides as an example of 'Government at its best,' and none of them felt that they wanted to or could do this function better than GPO."

He discussed the potential impact on the Federal Depository Library Program, observing that "there is no way to escape the conclusion that OMB's policy will seriously impair public access to Government information." He said although OMB would require agencies to continue providing publications for depository distribution, compliance with this requirement would be low. As support, he cited a 1998 inspector general review of the printing program of the National Institute of Health (NIH), which found that 78% of NIH's publications qualifying for depository distribution were not being provided.

DiMario told the Committee that "without GPO's transparent process for gathering publications for distribution to depository libraries, this program will most likely fall apart, and along with it public access to Government information through the depository system." He said the fact that electronic information dissemination is now widespread does not mitigate this concern, noting that GPO last year distributed to the libraries nearly 6 million copies of approximately 15,000 print, microfiche, CD-ROM titles for which no suitable electronic equivalents currently exist.

Finally, DiMario said GPO has good relations with customer agencies, and that he is willing to consider making changes in GPO's procurement practices that will improve services for agencies as long as they do not hinder competitive participation in GPO's procurement program. He also offered to "sit down with OMB and work out whatever problems have motivated them to issue this memorandum."

Public Printer DiMario's prepared statement before the JCP on the OMB proposal is available online at [www.access.gpo.gov/public-affairs/ppt.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/public-affairs/ppt.html).

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