

Question for Secretary Wu from Chairman Steve Buyer
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Committee on Veterans Affairs
October 6, 2004
Hearing on VA Smart Card Initiative(s)

1. VA and DoD have spent billions in the last decade developing stove piped electronic medical records that cant exchange or share information. What should the level of interoperability be between DoD and VA smart cards? Does the National Institute of Standards and Technology's Government Smart Card Interoperability Specifications published in July 2003 address this issue?

Answer: We are not involved with those specific projects. Therefore, we are not in a position to say exactly what should be the level of interoperability by those two agencies to conduct their respective missions. The GSC-IS provides a basis for the interoperability of smart cards produced by various vendors. By itself, however, it does not guarantee complete interoperability among divergent applications that may be loaded and run on the smart cards operating system. Many important technical and policy questions (e.g., credential acceptance policy) must still be addressed.

2. Has any specific agency or department been designated with the responsibility of overseeing the development and implementation of NIST's published guidelines?

Answer: Under the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget has the responsibility to oversee the development and implementation of standards and guidelines by NIST.

3. How does the smart card effort integrate with your planned implementation of single-sign-on technology?

Answer: NIST is not planning or implementing a single sign-on project. In general, GSC defines an interoperable smart card platform for electronic credentials. In single-sign on systems, GSC cards can hold multiple credentials for all the services accessed by the cardholder. The cardholder logs on to the card once, and the card can then seamlessly log the cardholder on to multiple services.