



September 22, 2005

The Honorable Mitt Romney  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House  
Room 360  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Romney:

For more than 35 years, the 350,000-member National Taxpayers Union (NTU) has advocated for lower taxes and limited government. We strongly believe that government programs and policies should not unnecessarily increase costs to taxpayers, nor should they drive up costs for businesses and consumers via regulation. NTU has confidence that your administration understands and supports these principles.

We are therefore troubled by your administration's proposed Information Domain-Enterprise Technical Reference Model, a technology mandate that seems likely to cost taxpayers millions of dollars in the form of increased government expenses and a greater regulatory burden.

The most effective way to promote efficient government is through the competitive market. When government seeks contractors, it should allow open competition among all parties that can meet a service requirement. Free market competition ultimately results in lower costs and better results. The most telling example in the last two decades comes from telecommunications, where deregulation and competition have resulted in reduced prices, more choice, and added services.

Unfortunately, Massachusetts's proposed technology policy represents arbitrary regulation at its worst. The policy mandates that only technology using OpenDocument formats can be used by state agencies, and that all agencies must migrate to such technology. Thus, this policy forces agencies to purchase new technology to replace currently operational systems and limits choice for any new systems. As a result, taxpayers will incur the costs of duplicative applications and the higher costs of bids awarded in a limited-competition environment. Further less quantifiable costs will likely be incurred as state employees are forbidden from using software and file formats which they prefer.

The policy also represents a double tax on many consumers and businesses that must communicate with the state. No mainstream personal computers are sold with pre-installed software that uses OpenDocument formats. In addition, no office productivity suites using OpenDocument are available at all for Apple computer users. Taxpaying citizens and businesses will have to invest in new technology, as well as training, simply to do business with the state.

Your election as Governor promised a new era of responsible governing and tax policy in the Commonwealth. It also suggested that the citizens of Massachusetts wanted a leader with a

strong sense of fiscal responsibility. The National Taxpayers Union hopes that you will recognize that your proposed technology policy represents a retreat from efficient and effective government. We urge you to withdraw this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Berthoud". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a stylized "B".

John Berthoud  
President