

# Will it play in Peoria?



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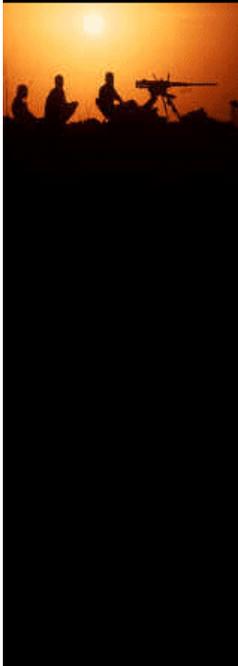
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## In Defense



06/2/03; Vol. 22 No. 13

## State lines

**Permission granted.** Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), chairwoman of the Governmental Affairs Committee, recently introduced two bills to streamline the grant process and let state and local governments use surplus federal grant money for homeland security.

The first bill, S 789, would provide for the appointment of a director of state and local government coordination within the federal Homeland Security Department.

Collins' second bill, S 838, would waive limitations on the use of funds appropriated for the Homeland Security Grant Program. The committee held a hearing last month to discuss the bill's provisions.

State governments would submit to HSD a request to use funds allocated for specific training, equipment, exercises and planning needs interchangeably.

**Web gains.** Virginia is slowly breaking the stovepiped systems that have driven up costs for IT projects, a state official said last month.

Many managers are putting information online to integrate systems and share data, and they're reaping cost savings for their effort, said Belchior Mira, CIO of Virginia's Human Resource Management Department.

For example, the department has added Web access to its employee benefits mainframe system, via the EmployeeDirect site.

Workers can enroll or make changes to their benefits directly on the site. The process takes a maximum of 15 minutes, Mira said, compared to as long as four weeks with the paper process, and has saved the state more than \$300,000.

Mira also said Virginia has improved its employee grievance process through automation.

An online grievance system lets officials in the Employee Dispute Resolution Department enter grievance information via the Internet. The paperwork burden has been cut by 95 percent, Mira said. And Virginia saved at least \$125,000 by using its own employees to build the system, he said.

**Wireless check.** The Delaware Department of Technology and Information has turned to sniffer software to see whether agencies have deployed wireless fidelity, or WiFi, networks and whether they meet state standards.

Each month the department checks a different location for nonstandard, or "illegal," use of a WiFi local network. During the course of one such check, the department discovered a serious violation, Delaware CIO Tom Jarrett said.

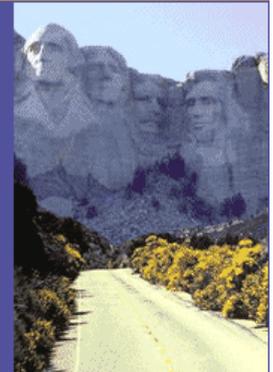
"I told the agency to cease and desist or in two days I would take them off the network," Jarrett said. Because the agency was "running wide open" with WiFi, they were putting the entire network community at risk of hacker and virus attacks, he said.

Monitoring of nonstandard WiFi networks is one way Jarrett said he has tried to improve network security since he began serving in September 2001 as state CIO and director of the Department of Technology and Information Services.

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