

MILLENNIUM 2000 PROBLEM TO COST STATE MILLIONS

From House Media

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The cost to the State of Oklahoma to modify software and replace hardware in the state's computers in anticipation of the "Millennium 2000" phenomenon could reach \$75 million, Rep. Fred Perry, a 16-year veteran of the computer industry, said Friday.

"In the year 2000, date-dependent computer systems may cease operating correctly because those systems were not designed to consider the century change," the Tulsa Republican said.

"It is anticipated there will be disruptions and a slowdown of services after Dec. 31, 1999, if Oklahoma governmental agencies and computer information service personnel do not plan adequately and take action before the millennium."

The dilemma could affect pension benefits, bond and interest payments, security systems, defense systems and even elevators, Perry warned.

Initial estimates from most of 125 state government agencies are that it will cost \$41 million to upgrade equipment to accommo-

date the date change, Perry said after meeting with Bill Shafer, data processing manager for the Office of State Finance.

According to Perry, Shafer said the Department of Human Services had the highest computer conversion cost estimate at about \$20 million. "However, it is our hope that all of these figures come down as software companies develop new programs to automate the process," he said.

Preliminary cost estimates "don't include any of the educational institutions in the state, which have not yet compiled information to meet the requirements of House Concurrent Resolution 1108," Perry added.

In HCR 1108, the Legislature directed all state agencies and encouraged all schools, "to begin planning and budgeting for the conversion of legacy systems, programs, databases and security systems, and to begin the process of preparing all state computer systems for the millennium."

The resolution, authored by Perry, directed the Office of State Finance to summarize estimates and plans of the various agencies.

Assistant Vice Chancellor Mary Ann Maletz said the Regents' office distributed survey forms to state universities, colleges and other offices in order to complete estimates and plans for their institutions.

The initial cost projection for the State of Oklahoma "shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone, since Texas estimated the effort there will be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, and fortune 500 companies such as American Airlines and Federal Express have estimated \$400 to \$500 million," Perry said.

"There are many lines of computer code to deal with, and some old hardware will need to be replaced. And, frankly, as long as they're at it, some state agencies will be better off to replace old hardware with client-server systems and new software," Perry added.

"This issue certainly is one that needs to be planned and budgeted for, to ensure state government functions properly in the future," said Rep. Dwayne Steidley, D-Claremore, vice chairman of the House Appropriations and Budget Committee.

The Office of State Finance is scheduled to deliver a formal report on the costs of Millennium 2000 on Nov. 19, to the House Science and Technology Committee, of which Perry is vice chairman.

"Our minds are lazier than our bodies."

La Rochefoucauld

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More than 100 public access points to the Internet will be set up in arts organizations and culturally-oriented community centers in every state. Through this initiative, members of the public who are interested in accessing the Internet can receive personal assistance helping them learn how to browse the Web and access its cultural resources. Access sites will receive a matching award of \$2,000 to \$4,000.

2) Helping artists & arts organizations become effective information providers on the Web. Ten institutions with existing telecommunications resources, such as libraries, universities, and community telecommunications centers, will each receive up to \$35,000 to serve as mentors to 10 local cultural organizations and 10 local artists, teaching them how to become effective information providers on the World Wide Web.

The trainees will then mentor another organization or artist within a year of completing their own training. By the autumn of 1997, this program will generate an Internet presence for 200 arts organizations and artists with 200 more in training.

Fourteen pilot sites were launched October 22. Kansas and Texas are participating as pilot sites, along with California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Minnesota, New York, Massachusetts, Florida, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Colorado and Illinois. Remaining sites will be selected through a competitive process, with awards announced in February 1997.

Information about applying for site awards may be obtained by sending email to mentorrfp@benton.org (for mentor awards) or accessrfp@benton.org (for access awards) or by visiting the Open Studio Web site. The Open Studio Web site also serves as a public clearinghouse for project infor-

mation, including a project description and status reports.

A national advisory group will guide Open Studio. The Benton Foundation has recently hired Anne Green as the project coordinator for Open Studio. Green, who has a law degree from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, was most recently the coordinator of People For the American Way's Artsave Project, a nationwide research and public education project in the visual and performing arts.

Open Studio is an integral part of an overall effort by the NEA to extend its public outreach and serve the arts and the public more effectively through the Internet. In April, the Arts Endowment launched its own Web site. The site includes a monthly magazine, a guide to the Arts Endowment, and an art resource center.

The NEA, which has a \$99.5 million budget this year, is the federal grantmaking agency created by Congress in 1965 to foster the excellence, diversity, and vitality of the arts in the United States and to broaden public access to the arts. NEA Leadership Initiatives were created in fiscal year 1996 to sponsor specific initiatives for projects of national significance and impact, or those that serve as models in one field or discipline.

The Benton Foundation, dedicated to protecting the public interest in the digital age, has long been a proponent for providing noncommercial public space in the new communications environment. The foundation's work ranges from published work on connecting schools and public opinion research on libraries to national policy summits on communications policy and practices in the public interest and the creation of a communications hub to link children's advocates.