Testimony of Nancy Erickson, Secretary of the Senate
before the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration

Good Morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Committee today about contemplated electronic filing of Senate candidate Federal Election Campaign Act documents. Before I testify about the project costs and timetable to implement electronic filing should the Senate so decide, I want to take a moment to give the Committee some background about the Office of the Secretary's responsibilities relating to public record filings.

The Public Records office is one of twenty six departments in the Office of the Secretary. As an Officer of the Senate, the Secretary has traditionally deferred policy making decisions to the Senate or the Committee. The Office takes seriously its responsibility to implement Senate policy in an efficient and cost effective manner.

Since enactment of the initial Federal Election Campaign Act in 1972, the Secretary's Office of Public Records has been the filing location for Senate FECA documents. Throughout the years, Senate candidates have filed their documents with the office in paper form. In addition to filing with the Office of Public Records, Senate candidates also have the option of voluntarily filing electronically with the FEC.

I am aware of the interest in mandating electronic filing of FECA reports. Over the course of my first two months as Secretary, I have concluded that my office is fully capable of implementing such a decision. We have the experience. The Secretary's Public Records office first implemented a web-based electronic filing program for documents filed under the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (LDA) in August of 2000. Since that time, the office has made changes to that system which recently resulted in the electronic filing of over 80% of lobbying documents (> 16,000 filings) during the last filing period (February 2007). Thus, the office has an extraordinary familiarity and experience with the technical issues relating to electronic filing.

In order to provide for electronic filing of FECA reports, the Office of Public Records would need to undertake the following process, which I estimate will take several months and cost approximately $100,000:

1. Assess our hardware to make sure our existing e-filing server has the capacity to accept and transfer very large data filings of over 400 Senate campaign filers. Currently, the server processes the equivalent of 64,000 pages for an LDA filing period. A FECA filing period has the potential of producing at least 240,000 pages.

2. Work with the Federal Election Commission to obtain their e-filing software, and make sure that the existing data communications technology will be able to transfer the data files timely and securely. I understand that the FEC provides their software to filers free of charge. I would hope a similar arrangement would be available to the Senate.

3. Research and fund adaptive software to be designed in order to fulfill the Secretary's statutory mandate to make the FECA documents available in the Senate Office of Public Records, which would achieve the following: validation and filer acknowledgment, a

middleware program to update the existing campaign finance data base and public terminals, and rewriting the protocol for transferring the new data files to the FEC.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify as well as for your continued support of our office. I look forward to working with the Committee on this issue.