

If you've never heard the term e-government, you're not alone. In a poll conducted last year for the Council for Excellence in Government, only 34 percent of citizens were familiar with electronic government (e-government). The poll also indicated that 70 percent of Americans think tax dollars should be invested in improving access to government services.(1)

Ten years ago many of us didn't have cellular phones, fewer of us had ever been on the Internet, and none of us could have predicted what the words dot com would come to mean. There's no denying it, information technologies - from the Internet and e-mail to database and word processing applications - have changed the way we work and live. Government is no exception. Information technology initiatives, now known as electronic government, are changing the way that the public sector works and interacts with citizens, businesses, and other governments. Predictions are that "government will change more in the next decade than it has in the past" hundred years.(2)

E-government impacts the way we interact with government agencies at all levels, whether that interaction takes place through telephone, fax, e-mail, a Web site, or directly into a data base. In the Northern District of Alabama, the United States Bankruptcy Court provides calendars, opinions, and official bankruptcy forms, all online. Elsewhere, county clerks are beginning to offer electronic online access to records. New technologies are changing the way that law enforcement investigates suspected criminals from tracking e-mails and eavesdropping cellular phone calls. These examples of e-government, and many others, show how IT is changing the way we share information, transact business, and make decisions. Lawyers are among the many professionals impacted by these changes.

---

(1) Council for Excellence in Government, *E-Government: To Connect, Protect, and Serve Us* (2002), at <http://www.excelgov.org/techcon/0225poll/report.PDF>.

(2) National Electronic Commerce Coordinating Council (NECCC), *E-Government Strategic Planning: A White Paper 5* (Released Dec. 13, 2000) (NECCC Conference Paper) *available at* [http://www.ec3.org/InfoCenter/12\\_Conference\\_Information/2000\\_Conference/Documents\\_Released\\_in\\_Vegas/Planning\\_Document.doc](http://www.ec3.org/InfoCenter/12_Conference_Information/2000_Conference/Documents_Released_in_Vegas/Planning_Document.doc).