



State of Alabama Picks Blue Coat Proxy Appliances to Protect Web Infrastructure

State Government Finds Ideal Solution for Letting Good Content In and Keeping Bad Content Out

As the person most responsible for Alabama's network infrastructure, chief information officer Jim Burns wanted to make sure public resources were being used to conduct public business. At the same time, he wasn't interested in turning the staff of his Information Services Division into a squad of "network nannies" for the state's 35,000 online users.

Blue Coat SG was easy to deploy, is easy to manage, and provides the state with the flexibility and power we need to manage our networks.

*Jim Burns, CIO,
State of Alabama Department of Finance Information Services Division.*

What Burns wanted and asked network operations manager Andy Cannon to identify was a true, enterprise-ready solution

that could regulate online activity, prevent security breaches, and improve network performance. Andy worked with a local security consulting company to evaluate and recommend alternative solutions. After evaluating several leading products, they concluded that only one company could fully address the state's Web-security requirements—Blue Coat Systems, Inc.

Blue Coat Solution Locks Down Web Traffic

Cannon deployed a pair of high-performance Blue Coat SG appliances in a redundant configuration at the division's Internet gateway in Montgomery. The appliances were interconnected using the Web Cache Control Protocol (WCCP) to improve network throughput.

Both appliances use site information from the Blue Coat WebFilter URL filtering database to block access to nearly nine million unauthorized websites. Including URL filtering on the two Blue Coat SG appliances enables the IT staff to set and enforce web access policies across an entire network without creating huge hurdles to deployment or maintenance.

The solution also allows the division to secure network resources against spyware and other vulnerabilities. In forward-proxy mode, the Blue Coat SG appliances provide Web antivirus, IM controls, P2P file sharing controls, streaming media controls, phishing attack unmasking, and bandwidth management.

These capabilities enabled the state to essentially "lock down" its network, Cannon says. All users are now required to go through an authentication process to gain access, and all traffic must flow through the network's firewall and Blue Coat SG appliances.



Organization

State of Alabama
Information Services Division
Montgomery, Alabama
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Industry

Government

Challenge

The State of Alabama wanted to regulate Web traffic and address productivity concerns. With a diverse population of up to 35,000 online users, the solution had to provide very granular control without significantly increasing in-house maintenance or support requirements.

Solution

The State of Alabama deployed two Blue Coat SG appliances in conjunction with Blue Coat WebFilter at its central gateway to control Web access, enhance security, and accelerate network performance. The state's network is now essentially "locked down" and WAN bandwidth usage has declined significantly.

Unique Infrastructure Gains Control and Flexibility

Significant improvements in security and performance are being realized even though the implementation involves a very unique infrastructure, notes senior network and security engineer Ellis Winborne. Along with supporting the delivery of fairly routine public services, the network is also accommodating the special requirements of state law enforcement, which sometimes needs to access websites that normally would be off-limits to state employees.

Winborne says the rules-based administration on Blue Coat SG requires little tuning but facilitates a very precise and flexible set-up process. "The granular configuration features allow us to give law enforcement access to those sites. The appliances are easy to manage and provide the flexibility we need to support certain groups."

More Efficient Use of Bandwidth Generates New Savings

The Blue Coat SG with WebFilter is also giving the state's bottom line a nice boost by reducing bandwidth usage. "Because of the Blue Coat deployment, we have already seen significant WAN bandwidth savings," Cannon says.

Winborne says he remains impressed by the accuracy of Blue Coat WebFilter. "It's proven to be a very accurate database. We've seen an extremely low level of false-positives with respect to user-accessed sites."

About the State of Alabama Information Services Division

The Department of Finance's Information Services Division is tasked with maintaining a statewide infrastructure and providing its 35,000 customers with information technology resources and services in a timely manner, properly managed at an acceptable level of cost and satisfaction.

