

## **Nonpartisan Testimony Gets White House Edit - Another Case of Track Changes Exposed**

The topic of metadata has managed to make its way into the news once again. Just recently, a member of a business organization advocating changes to the Social Security program was asked to testify before a government hearing. Part of the testimony included an e-mailed Word document which included supporting arguments in favor of reform. Unbeknownst to the author, the document also included comments that had been added by an associate commissioner of Social Security working for the White House.

The comments in and of themselves weren't particularly instructive, however, they were embarrassing and revealed that the author—supposedly a non-partisan member of the business community—was in fact receiving guidance from the administration and advocating their position on the matter.

### **Filtered Track Changes Are Difficult To Detect**

How did the track changes manage to 'hide' within the document unknown to the author? Very easily—too easily in fact. In Word 2002, a filtering feature was added to the Reviewing toolbar which makes it difficult to detect if Track Changes are turned on, or present in a document. If the filter is set to Final, the document appears online as it would if all proposed changes were accepted.

Needless to say this can pose serious problems for users who aren't thoroughly familiar with Track Changes. Even advanced users can find themselves confused.

### **Warning of Track Changes and Comments**

The first line of defense lies within Microsoft Word itself. You can turn on a security option in versions 2002-2003 to warn you whenever you print, save or send a file that contains track changes or comments. However, the warning is generic in nature and doesn't 'reveal' or show where any filtered (hidden) track changes and comments exist in the document. Moreover, the user reacting to the warning would need to know how to work with the Track Changes feature in order to accept or reject individual changes—something that the average (and in some cases advanced) user can find difficult.

### **Invest in a Metadata Removal Tool**

The best way to prevent documents with unwanted track changes and comments from 'going out the door' in the first place is to use a metadata removal tool. The Payne Metadata Assistant integrates with Outlook, GroupWise and Lotus Notes and is designed to detect track changes and comments in documents *before* they are sent.

The Metadata Assistant identifies and provides detailed analysis of each track change and comment in the document. When the document is cleaned all marked changes are accepted and all comments are deleted.



## **Are You Protected?**

It is amazing that with all the attention and press that has been paid to the issue of metadata, and by extension, track changes, that these types of high profile incidents continue to take place. How confident are you about the documents you, and your employees are sending out each day?