



The Internet Association

April 9, 2014

The Honorable Howard Coble
Chairman
Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, and the Internet
U.S. House Judiciary Committee
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Ranking Member
U.S. House Judiciary Committee
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Coble and Ranking Member Nadler:

On behalf of the Internet Association, I submit this letter concerning your April 10, 2014, hearing “Should the Department of Commerce Relinquish Direct Oversight Over ICANN?” The Internet Association represents the world’s leading Internet companies and their global community of users. We are dedicated to advancing public policy solutions to strengthen and protect Internet freedom, foster innovation and economic growth, and empower users. We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts on the future of Internet Governance and why we support the recent announcement regarding the National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s (NTIA) oversight authority over important technical Internet functions.

With global participation at nearly half the world’s population, the Internet is a transformative platform for technological innovation, democratic discourse, and economic growth. The Internet affords basic human rights to its users. The Internet accounts for 21% of Gross Domestic Product growth in advanced economies and facilitates \$8 trillion each year in e-commerce. In short, the Internet has revolutionized the way we work and live, drawing the world closer together and creating opportunities in places previously left behind.

The Internet is one of the greatest engines for economic growth, freedom, and prosperity the world has ever known thanks in large part to its multistakeholder governance model. As we shape what the Internet will become, one of our top priorities must be preserving this open, bottom-up system that ensures global citizens are able to access and take advantage of an ever-growing platform. Preserving a free Internet is essential to the preservation of political and economic liberty for global citizens. We do not believe inter-governmental bodies are the right way to govern the Internet. Instead, we should look for innovative solutions involving the breadth of the Internet community. A global Internet that is not constrained by geographic boundaries should not be governed solely through institutions defined by them.



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The future of the Internet community, and businesses that operate within it, is dependent on the continuation of the Internet's security, stability, interoperability, and resiliency. For our companies to continue to innovate, to foster development and change, and ultimately to succeed as businesses globally, we need the continuation of the current bottom-up, multistakeholder model of Internet governance. However, as the Internet continues to evolve, so too must the models that govern it.

The United States has performed an important role as the overseer of the contract with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to provide technical management of the Domain Name System. Equally important was the recognition when this agreement was first established that ultimately the Internet should be governed and held accountable not by governments but rather by public and private stakeholders. Therefore, since the creation of the model that governs the Internet today, it was always envisaged that this oversight role held by the United States would eventually transition to the private sector. The announcement by NTIA is simply the fulfillment of this vision.

The Internet Association supports the announcement by NTIA to fully transition oversight authority over a set of technical functions to the multistakeholder community, provided certain specified principles are met. Along with these principles came a clear statement from NTIA that contractual authority would not be transitioned if the proposed plan places governments or inter-governmental bodies in that role. To do so will mean that the entire community, working in conjunction with ICANN, will need to focus on improving existing accountability and transparency mechanisms to ensure the continued protection of these technical functions as well as the continued evolution of the multistakeholder model. Meeting these criteria is essential to ensuring the continued success of the global Internet.

The Internet community will be vigilant in pursuit of these principles, and we believe Congress should as well. We appreciate your interest in this issue, and the leadership you have shown in ensuring that the process that NTIA has started reaches a successful conclusion. As vital Internet stakeholders, we look forward to working with you to achieve that outcome.

Thank you again for your consideration of our concerns on this issue.

Sincerely,

Michael Beckerman
President and CEO
The Internet Association

Cc: Chairman Bob Goodlatte and Ranking Member John Conyers