



CENTER FOR SECURITY POLICY

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr., President & CEO

May 2, 2014

The Honorable Mike Kelly
U.S. House of Representatives
1519 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Kelly:

I wish to commend you for your leadership in connection with the Internet Stewardship Act of 2014 (H.R. 4367). The Obama administration's announcement that the United States will relinquish its long-standing exclusive oversight of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) will have serious ramifications for America's constitutional freedoms and strategic interests, as well as for the global economy.

First, although the precise structure of any new oversight arrangement has yet to be determined, we can be guaranteed that adversaries of freedom – Russia, China, and many others – would use any inter-governmental mechanism as a means not only to continue to deny access to information and freedom of expression to their own populations, but to deny them to the United States and other Western democracies as well. Such nations would have the ability to deny or otherwise sabotage domain names for any individuals, organizations, or ideas with which they do not agree – in other words, the ability to enforce censorship outside their own borders, in direct contravention of the First Amendment.

Second, any abdication of Internet control to hostile nations opens the potential for such nations further to use the Internet as an instrument of warfare. The United States and its allies have already been victims of cyber-attacks undertaken by countries such as China and Iran. Inter-governmental control over Internet domain names could provide a significant additional means by which to initiate such hostilities.

Third, a multi-national arrangement would likely empower international, unaccountable bureaucrats – including some representing hostile governments – to determine what can and cannot be done with the Internet. Such an arrangement would serve as an impediment to the technological innovation that, under American stewardship, has made the Internet the dynamic, evolving communication and transactional platform that it is.



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Finally, if the United Nations itself were to assume responsibility for the assignment and maintenance of Internet domain names, it would be well-positioned to use such authority as a revenue-generating mechanism, creating a new opportunity for Americans to be taxed without representation. Additionally, such a capacity for self-financing would eliminate United Nations reliance on American funds, and any leverage that funding provides for the United States to impose at least *some* restraint on that institution's typically adversarial agenda towards us and allies such as Israel.

For these reasons, it would be a serious mistake and contrary to the national interest for the Department of Commerce to abdicate American oversight of ICANN absent explicit congressional authorization to that effect.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr.
President & CEO,
Center for Security Policy