

Congressman Steve Scalise
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Internet Governance After ICANN 53”
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Statement for the Record

Since the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced its intention to transition the U.S. government’s role in the Internet’s numbering functions to the multistakeholder Internet community, I have remained concerned whether this transition was in the best interest of the Internet and whether the global community was capable of taking on this responsibility.

No one can argue with the success of the Internet since its inception, and this is due to the United States’ commitment to innovation and Internet freedom. My concern has been that changing the Internet’s governance structure could jeopardize these two ideals, especially if enemies of Internet freedom and bad actors in the international community have more control over its management.

Much work has been done by NTIA, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), and the global Internet community to develop a plan for transitioning the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) function. It appears that ICANN and the global community are making progress in developing a plan.

However, progress does not guarantee a successful outcome. And given the importance of the Internet, anything short of a successful outcome is unacceptable. I remained concerned about the transition and NTIA’s commitment to the criteria it outlined to assess any potential transition proposal.

As has been repeatedly stated, ICANN must improve its transparency and accountability. This will give all stakeholders greater confidence in ICANN’s ability to manage these important functions, as well as its ability to remain free of undue influence by a foreign government or any portion of the multistakeholder system.

NTIA has repeatedly expressed its commitment to the criteria it outlined in March 2014, and my hope is that this commitment remains strong until the transition is complete. I am pleased that Administrator Strickland has stated that NTIA will renew the current contract.

My hope is that any future decision to renew the contract or complete the transition is based on the existing NTIA criteria and the U.S.’ strong commitment to Internet freedom, not on inevitability or political expediency. I caution Administrator Strickland against completing the transition just because a new administration will take over in January 2017, and I hope this is not a factor.

Completing the privatization of the Internet domain name system must be done carefully and must be done only if Internet freedom remains strong.