

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “Privatizing the Internet Assigned Number Authority”
March 17, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Two years ago, NTIA made the announcement it would work to transition the stewardship of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority to an international multi-stakeholder community. This announcement ignited significant questions and concerns with the potential risks associated with a transition. Would a new model allow for the capture by any one government? What are the national security implications? How will ICANN be held accountable for its decisions without NTIA oversight?

Since NTIA stated its intent, this subcommittee has held thoughtful discussions in an effort to get answers. Through a series of hearings, we've asked these questions to fully understand the existing contract, the risks that should be considered with a potential transition, and what safeguards are necessary to reduce any threats. We received input from NTIA Administrator Strickling, ICANN, and the stakeholders who participate in the global community. These discussions have proved valuable to the process and many of the concerns and mechanisms addressed here have become an integral part of the community's work. I've referenced the importance of the Affirmations of Commitments, especially the requirements that ICANN remain headquartered in the United States and the multi-stakeholder community conduct an ongoing review of ICANN's operations. We've seen the value of using "stress tests" to identify policies needed for an accountable governing structure. Fundamental bylaws that require a supermajority to change, actionable mechanisms that empower the community, and an independent review of board decisions are all ideas that can hold the ICANN Board accountable for its actions and resistant to capture. I am relieved to hear that ICANN has committed to these accountability measures regardless of whether the transition progresses or not. These policies are critical to ensuring that ICANN remain a stable steward of IANA and must be a part of any successful transition.

Last week marked a major milestone in the IANA transition process as the multi-stakeholder community transmitted its proposal to the U.S. government for review. The entire community deserves recognition and appreciation for the countless hours of the hard work and commitment that went into crafting this plan. Now we embark on the next stage of our work: review of the proposal.

As we dive into the specifics of the transition proposal today, it is important to also acknowledge the technical foundation the transition rests upon. In recent months, a country code top-level domain experienced a denial of service attack on its root infrastructure. To ameliorate the impact of this attack, the country wanted to add servers to its root, but such a change would require the approval of IANA. Due to delays in this routine procedure the domain was inaccessible for days. Technical functions of the Internet should move at Internet speed, not the speed of the U.S. bureaucracy. This is the challenge the transition looks to solve without introducing new vulnerabilities into Internet governance.

The GAO report initiated by leaders of this committee gives us some guidance in our effort as it recommended NTIA establish an evaluation framework to guide the analysis of the proposal. I applaud NTIA for accepting this good-government approach to guarantee its requirements are met. As NTIA embarks on its work, I want to reiterate what I have been saying throughout this

entire process. This transition is far too important to be rushed by any artificial deadline. Much work still remains, and if needed, NTIA should take the steps to extend the contract. It is more important to get this done right, than to simply get it done.

Lastly, while we await the analysis of the proposal from NTIA, it is important to stress the important role that Congress plays during this process. The bipartisan work reflected in the DOTCOM Act maintains our oversight authority to ensure the requirements of a transition established by NTIA are met by the proposal. I appreciate the commitment from NTIA Administrator Larry Strickling to provide Congress with the time and opportunity to review the proposal. It is critical to the future of the Internet that we ensure a transition will meet our nation's – and the world's – needs. The stakes are simply too high.

Today we'll hear from a panel of stakeholder witnesses on their perspective of the multi-stakeholder process and the transition proposal. Many of you have participated directly in this process and we are fortunate to have your expertise. Thank you for sharing your insight and being here to answer any questions that remain.

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