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Computer & Communications Industry Association

April 10, 2013

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications & Technology
Committee on Energy & Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Communications & Technology
Committee on Energy & Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton, Chairman Walden, and Ranking Members Waxman and Eshoo:

CCIA is steadfast in support of the multi-stakeholder model of global Internet governance that has allowed the Internet to expand internationally as an engine of human empowerment and economic opportunity and growth. CCIA values the unanimous support for our country's diplomatic position found in the U.S. Congress and appreciates the intent of efforts to reinforce the message. We participated in the U.S. delegation to the ITU meeting in Dubai last year to help oppose initiatives led by some national governments to impose ITU pricing and content restrictions on international Internet traffic. We are fully engaged in worldwide defense of non-governmental Internet governance for the next ITU meeting, the World Technology Policy Forum in Geneva next month.


However, we are concerned that legislation in this area may be vulnerable to misuse and misinterpretation in the domestic context, and potentially counterproductive to our united front and constructive approach in international debates. We are seeking to find and build support in dozens of other countries for the general principles of Internet Freedom we all in the U.S. adhere to. But efforts that may be seen as attempts by the USG to heavily pressure agreement with us are contrary to the subtle diplomatic efforts considered likely to be most productive.

Domestic solidarity on global Internet freedom is also very important. Pending legislation could cause fracturing of our current posture because it would be seen by some as compromising existing statutory mandates on universal access to advanced communications services. We and many others believe FCC authority over end user access to the open Internet is critical for empowerment of our own citizens and businesses. We also understand the desire for other nations to adopt similar protections for their people, and should be wary of proscribing domestic policy for other sovereign nations.

Further, domestic rules governing interconnection of communications using IP technology are often important for smoothly functioning domestic network infrastructure and service competition in any nation. We do not believe basic Internet access and interconnection requirements constitute “government control” of the Internet as asserted by some major network operators. While there may be more positive interpretations of “control”, the ambiguity of this broad undefined term will foster unwelcome debate and controversy, and will distract from efforts to address important issues in sensitive international arenas.

The casting of national government protections for citizens relating to broadband access and IP telecom networks as “government control” of the Internet has effectively poisoned the well for the use of such language in domestic legislation. Fortunately, U.S. legislation is unnecessary for strong continued American support of the traditional multi-stakeholder model for global Internet governance and the rejection of inter-governmental Internet regulations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E J Black". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Edward J. Black
President & CEO
Computer & Communications Industry Association