

September 2, 2020

The Honorable Eliot Engel
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Room 2426 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael McCaul
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Room 2001 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Room 2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1026 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Industry Concerns Related to U.S. Agency for Global Media Hold on Allocated Funding for Open Technology Fund

Dear Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger:

The undersigned organizations write to express concern regarding recent reports that the Open Technology Fund (OTF) has issued stop-work orders on approximately 80% of its active internet freedom projects due to a delay in receiving Congressionally allocated funding from the U.S. Agency for Global Media.¹ We respectfully request that you seek a prompt disbursement of allocated funds to permit the resumption of OTF's important internet freedom and security projects.

We believe that in order for the internet to remain an open and dynamic vehicle for innovation, freedom, and empowerment, the United States must continue to serve as a leader in promoting research and availability of security technologies that enable consumers and businesses to defend against an ever-increasing array of cybersecurity threats from hostile actors.

Over the past eight years, OTF has provided vital support for open-source security projects that have become widely-used tools for protecting sensitive personal and business data. For example, OTF was an early supporter of the development of secure communications technology that is currently deployed in commercial messaging services with a global user base of over two billion

¹ Daniel Lippman, "Funding fight threatens to halt U.S. internet freedom projects," Politico (July 30, 2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/30/internet-freedom-projects-funding-388983>.

individuals.² OTF has also supported research and development of tools for websites to enable secure browsing and mitigate internet routing attacks, currently utilized in the protection of hundreds of millions of websites.³

As more Americans adopt digital products and services to connect with friends and family, conduct business and commerce, access education, receive health information, and enjoy entertainment, strong security safeguards are increasingly necessary. Interruptions to OTF's work threatens to leave Americans less secure in the evolving digital threat environment. We respectfully ask for your assistance in helping to ensure that OTF receives a prompt disbursement of Congressionally appropriated funds to resume its vital internet freedom and security work.

Sincerely,

Computer & Communications Industry Association
Engine
SIIA

² Open Technology Fund, "Open Whisper Systems,"
<https://www.opentech.fund/results/supported-projects/open-whisper-systems/>.

³ Open Technology Fund, "Secure Domain Validation,"
<https://www.opentech.fund/results/supported-projects/securing-domain-validation/>.