



## ISOC PILLAR INTERNET POLICY

Since its inception, the Internet Society has played a critical role in shaping public policy regarding the Internet. It's done so by leveraging its considerable strengths, which include the following.

- The ability to tap the brightest minds in the Internet technical community
- An understanding of leading-edge Internet technologies
- Links to the top experts studying the social impacts of the Internet
- Involvement in the standards process both at the Internet Engineering Task Force and elsewhere
- A truly global perspective and outreach

Today the Internet is at a critical juncture in its development, and Internet policy is more important than ever. The Net's evolution into a mass medium in many countries is resulting in increased pressure on policy makers to regulate the Internet, much as they regulate radio, television, and other mass media. But as ISOC members know, the Internet is more than just a means for communications and content distribution; it is a powerful platform for collaboration and distributed computing. With that new phase of development came new technical and policy challenges as well as even more need for advice and education. ISOC takes a two-pronged approach: (1) by providing white papers and statements on global issues being debated at the United Nations and elsewhere and

(2) by helping individual chapters effectively influence local policy debates.

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### POLICY GOALS

ISOC is committed to working with government officials, industry representatives, and Internet users around the world to help policy makers get the technical knowledge they need in order to make informed decisions. Accordingly, ISOC's work in Internet policy focuses on five key areas.

**1. The ability to connect.** ISOC wants to preserve the essential, end-to-end nature of the Internet and will oppose efforts to establish standards or practices that would make it difficult or impossible for some users of the Internet to use the full range of applications being developed for users.

**2. The ability to express.** As a mass medium, the Internet offers a powerful tool for self-expression. ISOC's work aims to ensure the continuation of private and, when appropriate, anonymous means of communication and collaboration on the Internet. Accordingly, ISOC will oppose efforts to censor what users would be reading or distributing over the Net. At the same time, ISOC will promote filtering technologies and other ways that users can block spam and other content they do not wish to see.

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**3. The ability to innovate.** The explosive growth of the Internet and the incredible variety of Internet applications are direct results of the Internet's open nature in regard to key e-mail and Web-based standards. To date, all companies—regardless of size or location—are able to develop and distribute new Internet killer applications. And ISOC will oppose efforts by governments and others to restrict the ways Internet technology can evolve in the future.

**4. The ability to share.** The many-to-many nature of the Internet makes it a powerful tool for information sharing and collaboration among those in the field of education, in business and industry, and in government and non-governmental organisations. It has given rise to the global, open-source community that developed many of the key technological components of the Internet, including the Domain Name System, the Web, and Web server software such as Apache. The Internet has increased users' access to education and has made digital libraries realities. Accordingly, ISOC will support the development of open-source software and oppose new technologies and legislation that would limit the well-established concept of fair use, which is essential to the collaborative nature of scholarship, education, and research.

**5. The ability to choose.** The growth of the Internet has been fastest where markets are the most free and most open. Unfortunately, in too many countries—especially less-developed countries that could most benefit from the power of the Internet—government regulation and the economic power of incumbent telecommunication monopolies severely limit the ability of new competitors to provide newer, better, cheaper, and more-innovative Internet-related products

and services. ISOC will continue advocating for government policies that foster competition in telecom services, Internet service provision, Internet-related software, and e-commerce applications.

ISOC is not alone in its efforts to address policy issues related to the transport of bits and to the middleware that supports applications. Many other organisations weigh in on issues affecting applications software and business models that e-commerce companies may choose to adopt. In such areas as protection of online consumers and taxation of Internet commerce, while ISOC may not take an active leadership role in shaping policy, it will actively support the work of other organisations whose positions are consistent with what's best for the Internet.

In the coming years, ISOC will continue using its educational programmes to distribute information on key policy issues, especially in developing countries. Most important, however, ISOC's role in shaping Internet policy and its ability to develop new mechanisms for affecting policy debates will depend on involvement by chapters, organisational members, and individual members.