

News from the Internet Society

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The Internet Society and Public Policy

Since its inception more than twelve years ago, members of the Internet Society have played key roles in the evolution of Internet technologies and in providing training on the uses of the Internet in countries around the globe. The society serves as the organizational home for the Internet Engineering Task Force, which develops the standards that ensure the stability, reliability, security, and scalability of the Internet. In addition, the Internet Society has provided valuable advice on key Internet-related policy decisions in order to ensure the continued rapid growth of the Internet.

Today, Internet policy is more important than ever before. The Internet is at a critical juncture in its development. In many countries, it is becoming a mass medium and as a result there is increasing pressure on policy makers to regulate it like radio, television, or other mass media. The Internet is more than just a means for communications (through e-mail and instant messaging) and content distribution (through the World Wide Web). It is becoming a platform for collaboration and distributed computing. With this new phase of development come new technical and policy challenges, and even more need for the kind of advice and education that the Internet Society can provide.

The Internet Society is committed to working with governments, industry, and Internet users around the world to ensure that the Internet develops in a way that ensures that all Internet users can harness the full power of the Internet. Accordingly, we work to ensure that all users enjoy the following:

1) The Ability to Connect - We want 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 Internet users.

2) The Ability to Speak - The Internet offers a powerful tool for self-expression and is becoming a new mass medium. We will work to ensure that the Internet will continue to allow private and where appropriate, anonymous, means of communication and collaboration. Accordingly, we will oppose efforts to censor what Internet users can read or distribute over the Net.

3) The Ability to Innovate - The explosive growth of the Internet and the incredible variety of Internet applications are a direct result of the fact that the key standards for the Internet and the Web are open.

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MORE...

The Internet Society (www.isoc.org) is a not-for-profit membership organization founded in 1991 to provide leadership in Internet related standards, education, and policy. With offices in Washington, DC, and Geneva, Switzerland, it is dedicated to ensuring the open development, evolution and use of the Internet for the benefit of people throughout the world. ISOC is the organizational home of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), the Internet Architecture Board (IAB), the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG) and other Internet-related bodies who together play a critical role in ensuring that the Internet develops in a stable and open manner.

Any company, regardless of size or location, has been able to develop and distribute its new "killer application" for the Internet. We will oppose efforts by government and others to restrict how 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 sharing, education, and collaboration. It has enabled the global community that developed many of the key technological components of the Internet, such as the Domain Name System, the Web, and Apache (the most common Web server software). Accordingly, we will foster new technologies and oppose legislation that would limit the well-established concept of fair use, which is essential to scholarship, education, and collaboration.

5) The Ability to Choose - The growth of the Internet has been fastest where markets are the most free and open. Unfortunately, in too many countries, particularly many less developed countries that could most benefit from the power of the Internet, government regulation and the economic power of incumbent telecom monopolies severely limit the ability of new competitors to provide new, better, cheaper, and innovative Internet-related services. We will continue to advocate for government policies that foster competition in telecommunication services, Internet service provision, Internet-related software, and e-commerce applications. By fostering the competition, government can stimulate innovation in the proprietary and open-source software that make the Internet - and Internet applications - possible.

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