

**Remarks of David J. Redl**  
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**--As Prepared for Delivery--**

**“Protecting and Expanding the Free and Open Internet”**

Thank you to Rick Kaplar, Dick Wiley and the Media Institute for inviting me to speak today.

Many of you are likely familiar with NTIA, but for those of you who aren't, we are an agency within the Department of Commerce that serves as the President's principal advisor on telecommunications and information policy. That means we are involved in a range of activities and discussions across the government, but our mission is focused on three key areas:

- We manage the federal government's use of radiofrequency spectrum and work to expand the use of spectrum by all users;
- We seek to expand broadband access and encourage adoption of broadband; and
- We work to ensure that the Internet remains an engine for innovation and economic growth.

Our work has much in common with the work of the Media Institute, and I want to thank you for all that you do to defend freedom of speech and foster a competitive communications industry.

**Internet Policy**

Freedom of expression is a basic human right and a bedrock American principle. At NTIA, our approach to Internet policy has this principle at its core. We are focused on protecting and promoting an open Internet, advocating for the free flow of information, and strengthening the global marketplace for digital products and services.

The Internet has become what it is today in part because of a longstanding, bipartisan consensus around the principle of multistakeholder policymaking and standards development – the idea that all stakeholders should participate in open and transparent decision-making processes. We must continue to fight for this principle – for an Internet that is open, interoperable, and governed through collaboration between all stakeholders.

I recognize that the open nature of the Internet comes with a variety of challenges. Governments around the world must address serious security, law enforcement and privacy issues.

In some countries, governments are responding with restrictive and isolationist policies. These include censorship, blocking, imposing a “right to be forgotten,” and requiring localized data storage. These actions are sometimes understandable, but ultimately regrettable. What happens is global companies end up getting caught in the middle of these conflicting policies, and as they work to address competing and inconsistent legal demands, users suffer diminished access and benefits.

I'm optimistic that governments will ultimately realize that it is in everyone's interest to keep the Internet open and keep the data flowing around the world. The key will be whether civil society, industry, and forward-looking voices in government are able to effectively highlight the benefits of a global Internet, to persuade those on the other side of the debate that the challenges of the free flow of data are far outweighed by the benefits. NTIA participates in multistakeholder discussions to find workable policy solutions to these problems, including the Internet and Jurisdiction Policy Network.

We continue to work with international partners to develop a common view on the technologies and trends that will shape the future Internet-enabled economy. NTIA remain a strong participant at ICANN as the United States Government's representative to the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC), and we support the continued evolution of the annual Internet Governance Forum, where we work with stakeholders of all types to share best practices and exchange information on Internet governance and policy issues.

NTIA is also making preparations for the International Telecommunication Union's treaty-making conference – the ITU Plenipotentiary – scheduled for October.

I believe the United States needs to press for changes to the ITU, including establishing effective membership oversight. We need to push back against efforts to move the ITU beyond its limited mandate and into Internet-related and cybersecurity matters.

The ITU must effectively and efficiently perform its vital functions in the area of radio communications, and it must foster, not hinder, pro-competitive policies for telecommunications, particularly in developing countries.

The ITU has five elected positions: Director General, Deputy Director General, and the Directors of the three Bureaus of the ITU. I am pleased to reiterate NTIA's strong support for the candidacy of Doreen Bogdan-Martin as Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau. The D-Sector, as it is generally known, is the part of the ITU that brings connectivity to parts of the world that have yet to realize the economic and societal benefits of the connectivity that many of us take for granted. Ms. Bogdan-Martin is a former NTIA official, a veteran of the ITU's processes, and I am certain that Doreen would make an outstanding director of the D-sector.

## **Broadband**

As we work to cement our vision of the Internet around the world, we're also focused on getting everyone in the United States connected. There are still too many people across the country that lack access to reliable, affordable broadband Internet service – a problem that's particularly acute in rural America.

There are many facets to the digital divide, but one of the toughest challenges is getting broadband networks deployed in rural areas with difficult terrain and low population density. Progress has also been slowed by bureaucracy, including expensive and lengthy application processes and regulatory reviews.

That's why a key part of the administration's strategy for expanding broadband deployment is removing barriers that slow or block new projects. NTIA is working to improve federal coordination around this goal through an interagency working group that we co-chair alongside the Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service.

Our group is focusing on three areas. The first is federal permitting. We're looking at what's required to place broadband facilities on Federal lands, with the goal of streamlining permitting efforts and establishing consistency across agencies.

The second area is federal funding of broadband projects. The group will report on the effectiveness of various federal broadband programs and will issue recommendations on how to better coordinate funding streams.

The third area for the working group is leveraging federal assets for broadband deployment. In January, President Trump issued a memo instructing the Interior Department to develop a plan to increase access to tower facilities and other infrastructure assets that the Department manages. This effort, and others like it, could potentially lower the cost of buildouts and encourage infrastructure deployment in rural America.

The digital divide has persisted for years, but the reasons behind it have always been changing. By better understanding where we are now, we will be better able to fix it.

We need accurate, reliable data analysis to properly inform private sector decisions, reduce regulatory barriers, and coordinate Federal programs that fund broadband infrastructure. We need to be able to aggregate existing information with data from multiple outlets across the states that are using innovative ideas to harness deployment coverage that may not be reflected in the Federal Communications Commission's Form 477 data.

Congress has asked NTIA to work with the FCC and the states to update the broadband map with more diverse data sources in an effort to produce a more accurate assessment of broadband capabilities and provide a tool for policymakers to better target the funds that are allocated to broadband.

NTIA has been a leader in collecting and analyzing broadband adoption data, and using that data to develop policy. We have decades of experience analyzing broadband in the United States. We've seen real results from the work that our BroadbandUSA program has done cultivating relationships with state and local government officials who spend their time thinking about how to improve broadband in their states. Many states have been willing to take on the difficult challenge of compiling worthwhile data and maintaining broadband maps.

BroadbandUSA also works with communities to identify resources and provide technical assistance, and we have helped more than 250 communities develop public-private partnerships to meet their connectivity needs and digital inclusion goals. Through events and webinars, BroadbandUSA is bringing together important voices across the country who can help to bridge the digital divide.

## **Spectrum**

Our efforts to unlock broadband infrastructure buildouts will have knock on effects for the deployment of the next generation of wireless technology. Our nation's broadband needs are increasingly wireless. Whether it's 5G wireless technologies that promise to deliver dramatic increases in wireless broadband speeds and bandwidth, or the unlicensed technologies we place in our homes, businesses, and communities, wireless broadband technologies are paving the way for more advanced manufacturing, health care services and public safety communications.

America is the world's leader in Wi-Fi and 4G LTE and we're among the leaders in bringing 5G to reality. It's essential to American competitiveness that we don't fall behind.

America's wireless industry is already making significant investments in preparation for 5G deployment. But they're also calling on the government to act, and we need to heed their call.

In order to ensure America's 5G leadership, the entire government must work in a coordinated fashion to support the industry's 5G push. From our perspective at NTIA, this support will take four forms: making spectrum available, removing obstacles to deploying infrastructure, ensuring we have a collective strategy to secure 5G networks, and collaborating on the global standards that will define how the 5G race unfolds

NTIA's most important responsibility will be finding enough spectrum to support competitive, ubiquitous and secure 5G in America. Spectrum is the invisible infrastructure of our digital world. It not only enables our mobile society, but it helps power many critical functions of the federal government, including national defense, atmospheric monitoring, air traffic control and space exploration.

So while we're moving as fast as possible to get more spectrum into the hands of private sector innovators, we must balance that with the needs of our national government spectrum users.

NTIA works with the Federal Communications Commission to get the balance right. We have been encouraged by the FCC's recent actions to ease regulations that impede deployment of wireless infrastructure, establish auction rules for the 24 and 28 GHz bands, and seek more efficient use of the 2.5 GHz band. These are the kinds of actions that will help America be the first to 5G.

As we look to achieve a balanced spectrum landscape, efficiency is the name of the game. We are actively identifying and studying spectrum bands that could be made available for commercial uses. Our approach historically has been to move out incumbent users to make way for commercial. But this is an expensive and time-consuming approach. And it's becoming more difficult as demand grows and the obvious candidates for relocation have dried up.

So we're focused on using advances in technology to increase efficiency and share spectrum to make sure we're getting the maximum benefit. Make no mistake, sharing is complex too. But we have made significant progress as a result of relationships and trust developed between industry and government. NTIA's spectrum team has spent years establishing those relationships and I am lucky to have an impressive team working to ensure that our spectrum processes continue to meet our country's needs.

We also have an excellent resource in our research lab, the Boulder, Colorado-based Institute for Telecommunication Sciences. ITS is home to world-leading experts in spectrum and telecommunications research. Engineers from ITS and our Office of Spectrum Management are currently working hard to bring to life an exciting sharing model in the 3.5 GHz band. This spectrum, known as the Citizens Broadband Radio Service, could be a crucial component to our 5G efforts. The heart of this innovative spectrum band are two systems that will allow commercial uses to coexist with military radar systems. ITS is collaborating with all interested stakeholders to certify these systems that are necessary to bring the band to market.

As we move aggressively to stand up 5G networks across the country, we must be equally aggressive in our efforts to secure them. The President has made clear that secure 5G is a vital part of the administration's National Security Strategy.

Once these networks are active, it's hard to think of a sector of our economy that won't depend on them. We cannot afford to put security on the backburner – we have to plan for security from the outset.

As a government, we are looking to collaborate broadly with industry to assess and identify gaps and opportunities in the development of global standards. We want to work with industry on a strategy to ensure U.S. interests are being adequately represented and our ideas advanced as effectively as possible across the standards landscape.

That means the entire landscape. In addition to the traditional commercial wireless standards bodies, we need to be engaged with standards initiatives related to the Internet of Things, connected automobiles, and other emerging technologies that will influence the 5G environment.

I'm excited about NTIA's ambitious policy agenda, and the really vital goals that we're working to achieve in the coming years. All of you here have perspectives and ideas that can enrich our agenda. My door is open – we want to hear from you about what you think is important, and what we can do to help. Thank you for your time.