

**Remarks of Jonathan Spalter
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INTRODUCTION

It's been roughly two days, 12 hours and 30 minutes since the Restoring Internet Freedom order went into effect.

The connected, digital world continues to spin on its axis.

- I look out at a sea of faces...not too many YET are doing the smartphone prayer;
- Social media is abuzz about the G7 and North Korea...the Caps and Kanye;
- Advocates across the political spectrum are making their digital voices heard and trolling my tweets; and
- I just ordered the family groceries from Jeff Bezos. Thank you, Jeff!

Of course, the internet means a lot more to all of us.

- It connects my 15-year-old daughter and others managing chronic disease to their physicians and caregivers...and, thanks to AI, the right doses at the right time of life-saving medication.
- The internet connects people across this country to jobs and economic opportunity.
- It helps keeps our citizens up-to-speed on the latest news—real and fake.
- It allows anyone to take a class at MIT or Harvard...tour a Smithsonian museum...and access myriad other resources.

We know this. And, whether you live in policy or technology—or at the intersection of both...whether your companies are at the core or the edge or in the cloud...whether you work in the private sector or the non-profit world pressing to see the digital age fully include all Americans...we should take great pride in where we are today.

It's been 16 years since Tim Wu coined the phrase "net neutrality."

Over time, this simple, straightforward and universally embraced notion mutated into an all-out passion play across the U.S. internet ecosystem—paying no mind to the violent AGREEMENT of all sides that here in the greatest democracy on earth people have the same fundamental right to free speech in the digital world as we do in the physical one.

The arguments were distilled down to soundbites that misled and stoked fear, and they still do. Yet despite the years-long slog of this confounding policy debate, innovation persisted:

- Driverless cars are now science NON-fiction.
- Everything soon will be super intuitive with AI and super cool with AR and VR.
- And, at the heart of all this progress is the core...broadband providers that pull fiber, climb poles and invest hundreds of billions of dollars so that the United States of America can continue to be the global leader in innovation.
- Apples to apples...inflation-adjusted...you could put a man on the moon and build the entire interstate highway system...combined...and not match U.S. broadband providers' investment in our economy over the last couple of decades.

That is what attracted me to this job...and convinced me to pack up my family and move from the conservative bastion of Berkeley, CA to the nation's capital last year. I'd have the opportunity to work with the companies—large and small—making all of this progress possible.

Imagine What We Could Do Together

So, I've looked forward to this day...when all the rhetorical chips were called on the various doom-and-gloom scenarios fueling all the panic around net neutrality. Internet freedom has been restored, and your net will remain neutral.

The deeper question before us now: Can we turn the page and look ahead?

Rather than raise a ruckus about ideals we already all embrace, I say it's time instead to collectively lift our sights.

For too long, U.S. innovation policy has been dominated by a hypothetical debate centered around the question: What if something bad happens? Well, just imagine what we could achieve if we focused all that brainpower, intensity and resources on achieving great things together?

Put aside the extremes and you'll find: From broadband's edge to its core...businesses large and small...workers in virtually every sector of our economy...consumers, to the people they elect in Washington to help lead our country forward—our interests are fundamentally aligning. In fact, if you scratch the surface, you'll see that we share key principles and common goals that could unite what has become a far too fragmented ecosystem and propel the next chapter of progress.

Creating more cohesion will require support from the ground up, and I believe that unity can be built around five pillars.

PILLAR ONE: CONNECT EVERYONE

Pillar number one is universal connectivity.

The good news for our world: For the first time this year, a majority of the planet will be connected.

The disappointing news here: In the strongest economy on earth, three and a half million American households^[1] risk being left behind.

These are the folks who have the most to gain from high-speed connectivity. By and large, they live in places like the hundreds of off-the-grid communities in the remote bush of Alaska that are accessible only by boat or snow mobile...where populations are so sparse that the business case breaks down for network deployment.

They live in communities like Rock Springs and Big Bend Texas, along the Woodford Shale in northern Oklahoma, near New Mexico's Plains of Saint Agustin and in the Flathead Nation of Western Montana – all places I've visited in the last few months, and all served by the proud, resilient and determined members of USTelecom, who are deeply committed to their neighbors, and the power and potential broadband can deliver to them.

Recently, I visited the network operations center of SilverStar Communications along the Star Valley in western Wyoming. This is a company that started out connecting farmers and ranchers to telephone service using cattle wire. Today, they connect their customers to broadband.

What struck me sitting in their center in the middle of the day: 80% of their network traffic came from three sites: Netflix...YouTube...and Amazon. Delivering broadband to rural communities is increasingly costly and complex.

To finish the job, we need strong partners. We have one in the government—at the FCC, the Department of Agriculture and other agencies. But the problem still isn't solved. We still have lots of work to do. We missed a critical opportunity with the recent infrastructure efforts. We need to do better at walking our talk about the importance of broadband to all Americans and turning our ambitious words into actual progress connecting all Americans to broadband's many opportunities.

But we should not ask simply what the government can do for rural America. We all have a stake in working together to find solutions.

Make no mistake: When it comes to connecting all Americans, we have the means and the opportunity to relegate this challenge to the history books. All that remains is a question of will.

I also think there is growing appetite and collective will to boost consumer confidence in how the internet ecosystem handles critical issues.

PILLAR TWO: CONSISTENT ONLINE SAFEGUARDS

This leads to pillar two: We need consistent safeguards across the internet.

Broadband companies have long agreed to no blocking and throttling. We have long had industry standards on privacy—covering transparency, choice, security

and notifications in the case of a data breach—all based on the highly respected FTC framework.

But the reality today is the companies making headlines for privacy mis-steps or blocking content aren't the ISPs.

Just witness the back-and-forth between Google and Amazon blocking the sale of each other's products, services and content on their respective platforms.

This was a fatal flaw of Title II: It is no longer acceptable to write rules either here in Washington or in any state that omit the most powerful and valuable—at least in terms of market cap—players of the digital age.

We all have a stake in getting modern rules right because if we don't, then others will continue to fill the void.

We've seen it with the EU on GDPR. Companies with global reach are implementing it worldwide. I'm sure all of you dutifully read the dozens of "updates to our privacy policy" emails you received last month before clicking "agree." The Wall Street Journal recently crowned the EU antitrust chief "the de facto global regulator for the U.S. tech giants" for her record-setting fines.

All of this reinforces what should be self-evident: Consumers and the companies serving them deserve consistent, clear, enforceable online protections.

This leads to the third pillar: There is only one internet...and it deserves a national policy framework.

PILLAR THREE: U.S. INNOVATION POLICY MUST BE A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

On data privacy, on an open internet, on a framework for innovation, it's all the same. If we don't lead on policy...we risk our leadership on innovation.

The regulatory ping pong in Washington for the past eight years...the Europeans stepping up...the states now stepping in...all are evidence of what happens when we in Washington abdicate and equivocate. It's no way to run half the economy.

For most of the past two-plus decades, the operating system of U.S. innovation policy has been non-partisan and infused with American optimism. It was built into its algorithm.

Our policymakers believed in and sought to encourage all that was possible. So they exercised restraint...and with vigilance gave this promethean innovation room to expand and grow and evolve—transforming and improving our economy and our way of life.

So in restoring internet freedom, Chairman Pai restored the guiding principles of three successive administrations...Clinton...George W. Bush...and, let's not forget, the first six years of the Obama administration. In doing so, it's both an act of courage and should be a subject of high praise that Chairman Pai restored the bipartisan and forward-looking DNA that gave rise to the open internet, which has always been central to American consumers online experience.

When I lived in the Bay Area, I used to take my kids to the parks of the former Alameda naval air station. The location was originally the western terminal point of the transcontinental railroad. That railroad transformed our economy in the 19th century.

Broadband has done the same today—placing California (and our nation) at the global epicenter of so much economic, intellectual and tech dynamism. So it pains me as a Californian to see my state at the forefront of efforts to fracture a unified national innovation policy.

If we had regulated broadband networks—or the railroad system before it—on a 50-state basis. We wouldn't have either as we know it today. We'd have the DC Streetcar system. It goes 2.2 miles down H Street...and then everyone gave up.

Clearly, policymakers at all levels of government should be praised for wanting to do everything they can to encourage innovation and broadband-centric opportunities in their communities. Yet nothing could be more counter to the collective cause than everyone—no matter how well meaning—writing their own set of rules for how the global internet should operate in their neck of the woods.

Just this week, California legislator Scott Weiner, the chief author of the state's proposed net neutrality legislation, someone I know from my days in the Bay Area, noted that—if nothing else—his legislation is a prod for Washington to act. Fair point.

Protections should be no different for consumers in Minnesota or Iowa than they are in California or Florida. Equally true, consumers deserve consistent safeguards across the online world, whether engaging with Facebook, Google, Verizon, Amazon or Comcast.

Vint Cerf presciently told us in the last century that one day the internet would be interplanetary. I'll be happy to negotiate with the little green men once they accept my friend request. But for now, if we truly believe that all Americans deserve an open internet, then we should fight together at the federal level for permanent, even-handed protections that apply across the entire internet and exist in statute on a permanent basis.

PILLAR FOUR: LOCK ARMS FOR THE NATION'S CYBERSECURITY

We've spent a lot of time as a community on the hypothetical threats, when the real ones are creeping up on us. Cybersecurity is the poster child for this new

reality...which leads to the fourth pillar—already underway: It is time to lock arms for the nation's cybersecurity.

It's been seven years since the Department of Defense declared cyberspace an "operational domain" that U.S. forces will be trained to defend. Headlines virtually every day remind us just how mission-critical this theater of warfare has become.

The bad guys? They don't play by the rules. We have zero shot at keeping pace with such a formidable threat if we don't stand together...both across the internet ecosystem and the public and private sectors. It requires a whole new and nimble paradigm.

Fortunately, we're building just that today. Together with the Information Technology Industry Council—and specifically our founding partners: great companies like Akamai, Ericsson, IBM, Intel, Oracle, Samsung and SAP...leading broadband providers like Verizon, CenturyLink and AT&T...and their global counterparts NTT and Telefonica...have united to form and rapidly scale the Council to Secure the Digital Economy. By the way, we welcome others to join us--from the cloud to the device manufacturers. In fact, just last month, the Consumer Technology Association joined this all-hands cross-industry effort as a partner in key workstreams.

Our work is highly operational and concrete. Our first project will be to develop a global guide to anti-botnet practices. Next will be to mobilize more effective incident response mechanisms to safeguard the digital economy in the event of a major cyberattack.

Our work will continue with our government partners here in the U.S. and globally to minimize current threats, while staying one step ahead of whatever comes next—and perhaps providing a model for a more collaborative paradigm to truly 'save the internet.'

PILLAR FIVE: ASK THE BIG QUESTIONS ABOUT U.S. POLICIES

Other threats loom beyond cyber, from the alarming suspension of disbelief that it actually costs money to build networks—lots and lots of it...to the inescapable reality that our nation's continued global leadership is hardly preordained. There are threats to our primacy on the world stage. We see this playing out in 5G and network evolution. We need to be smart about the next steps we take.

This leads to the fifth and final pillar today: We need to close the gap between outmoded regulatory constructs and the modern, connected world.

It's been 22 years since the Telecommunications Act of 1996 was passed, ushering in a new era of internet innovation and American leadership in tech.

We've built entire industries around the silos of cable and telecom and satellite...wired and wireless...edge and core. As a result, we have a regulatory

structure that's in fighting form for the 1990s...not so much 2018...let alone 2025. Meanwhile the internet—and the consumers guiding its evolution—have long left these constructs in the dust.

Our job as the policy nerds—and I say this with affection and include myself—is to dive deep on the details. We sort through NPRMs on regulatory classifications and draft reply comments in weedy but important proceedings awash in alphabet soup—RBOC, CLEC, ILEC, MVPD, ISP, CMRS. But perhaps we need to take a beat, step back from the scrum and set our sights on the bigger picture.

It's time to think big and different about not only our innovation policy, but the architecture of the governing agencies involved in its oversight. Things change—in our world, quite rapidly—and our governing institutions need to reflect modern realities. This is nothing new. The FCC first existed to regulate radio.

I'm not here to dictate solutions. I'm here to say now is the time to ask the bold questions and find modern, constructive answers together.

CONCLUSION: LIFTING OUR SIGHTS

If the first two-plus decades of the digital era tells us anything, it's that it takes innovation and vision throughout the ecosystem to change the world. I believe we are still in beta when it comes to the prospects for what we can collectively achieve.

But it requires respect, good faith and a spirit of collaboration. The notion, for example, that broadband companies are "just pipes" diminishes our ambitions for the whole ecosystem.

All of us are in the business of innovation.

If we are to dream big and deliver on the big ideas—like finally closing the digital divide—then we must first close the divide that exists within our own innovation community and here in Washington.

Yes, Congress should pass legislation. Yes, policymakers need to modernize our regulatory framework. But it's also on us...not just to lob tweets at each other from the safety of our screens...but to actually talk to one another and find ways to constructively move this innovation economy forward.

Consumers want to feel confident and protected; they're also pretty big fans of technology-fueled progress and economic growth. The next chapter of the nation's innovation policy should insist with determination that they can have both. Let's give it to them.

So, I say again: It's not about raising a ruckus; it's about lifting our sights.

Thank you.

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