



November 2, 2005

The Honorable Norm Coleman
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Coleman:

On behalf of the 350,000 members of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I write to commend your efforts to ensure that the basic organizing structure of Internet does not fall under the burdensome yoke of an international bureaucracy. By sponsoring S. Res. 273, you have sent a strong message to those factions seeking to internationalize control over the Internet at the upcoming World Summit on the Information Society.

Worldwide Internet usage has grown 160 percent since 2000, and the spread of Internet access has served as a powerful force for connecting people, ideas, and goods across the globe. Yet a serious, coordinated effort is afoot to remove the adaptable and flexible organizational guidance of the Internet from the US-based, non-profit Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and hand it over to a new United Nations (UN) bureaucracy.

The power to tax often accompanies the power to govern, and the establishment of an international Internet governance body could create another bureaucratic sinkhole for American tax dollars. Indeed, such raids on taxpayer wallets have already been called for by international actors. A UN report envisions “a ‘BIT’ tax and a patent tax [that] could raise funds from those who already have access to technology, with the proceeds used to extend the benefits to all.” The “Digital Solidarity Fund” concept, originally put forth by Senegal and subsequently endorsed by world leaders at the UN’s 2005 Millennium Summit, calls for money collected through the Fund (separate from general UN coffers) to be used to “bridge the digital divide.”

While such revenue schemes are voluntary or still being designed, Internet taxes and fees (along with the corruption and inefficiency that stains many UN programs) are worryingly feasible outcomes of internationalizing control over the Internet. In fact, the second phase of the UN Internet governance process commences as early as this month, when a summit in Tunisia will (among other topics) deliberate upon “financing mechanisms” for Internet governance.

The Internet is flourishing under the steady oversight of the United States. Stifling the free flow of information and goods under the weight of yet another international establishment would be extremely harmful to consumers, taxpayers, the idea of free speech, and the global economy. NTU urges your colleagues to sign onto your critically important resolution, which, along with Representative Doolittle’s, Boucher’s, and Goodlatte’s sense of the Congress resolution (H. Con. Res. 268), will be a significant step in halting a UN takeover of the Internet.

Sincerely,

Kristina Rasmussen
Government Affairs Manager