

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 19, 2016

The Honorable Lawrence E. Strickling
Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Strickling:

The proliferation of connected technologies, known as the Internet of Things (IoT), is generating significant interest among consumers, the private sector, policymakers, and other stakeholders. As members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, we have been working together for several months to raise awareness of the potential of the IoT and to deepen our own knowledge on this exponential evolution of the Internet. We commend you for your recent announcement initiating an inquiry regarding the IoT. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) request for public comment (RFC) on IoT is a good first step and complements the legislation we introduced several weeks ago.

As part of our work on IoT over the last year, we have met with stakeholders to discuss many of the issues raised in the RFC. The common theme we heard from stakeholders has been concern for conflicting IoT requirements by different agencies and an overall dearth of collaboration to promote and regulate the IoT. Stakeholders seem concerned that conflicting regulation could create risks for consumers and dampen IoT innovation. Indeed, as is pointed out in NTIA's RFC, "Thus far, no U.S. agency is taking a holistic view."

Our recently introduced DIGIT Act aims to address this gap by requiring an interagency dialogue on IoT and recommendations to Congress based on these discussions. To the extent this concern about regulatory silos is also reflected in responses to the RFC, we hope NTIA's green paper will provide robust recommendations for broad inter-agency collaboration that will help avoid regulatory silos to ensure that consumers are protected while also enabling innovation in IoT.

To the extent the federal government must take concrete steps to leverage the emerging IoT for the benefit of our country, we urge strong attention be paid to proposals that shed light on how we can better work across sectors and agencies to reap the full benefits of the IoT.

In 2015, the Center for Data Innovation released a report that noted, "Just as the public sector was instrumental in enabling the development and deployment of the Internet, it must play a similar role to ensure the success of the Internet of Things." A comprehensive strategy could move the United States forward, and in March of last year, we successfully passed a Senate resolution calling for this type of modern framework around IoT innovation, recognizing the importance of consensus-based best practices and the need for innovators to drive the future development of the IoT.

In a recent editorial,¹ we outlined three key principles that will help the United States realize the full potential of the IoT. These include:

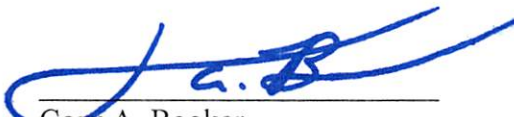
- Looking at policies that transcend traditional regulatory silos;
- Collaborating across industries, agencies, and sectors to find solutions to our toughest challenges; and
- Safeguarding the public good and consumer protection while avoiding unnecessary regulations.


We appreciate your ongoing support in fostering a regulatory environment for the IoT that aims to maximize the potential and development of the IoT to the benefit of stakeholders, including consumers, businesses, and the government.

Sincerely,


Brian Schatz
U.S. Senator


Deb Fischer
U.S. Senator


Cory A. Booker
U.S. Senator


Kelly Ayotte
U.S. Senator

¹ <http://www.cta.tech/i3/Move/2016/March-April/Policy-makers-Must-Look-Ahead-to-Realize-the-Potent.aspx>

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