

AFTRA

American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, AFL-CIO

November 14, 2011

The Honorable John Bryson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Bryson:

The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, AFL-CIO represents more than 70,000 professional performers, recording artists and broadcasters who work across the spectrum of the entertainment and media industries, including commercial advertisements on television, radio and digital media.

We are writing to you to express our strong concern with respect to the June 2011 decision by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to approve the top-level domain (gTLD) Applicant Guidebook and to move forward with plans to open the new gTLD application window on January 12, 2012 (the ICANN plan, decision or ICANN Proposal) on a virtually unlimited basis.

ICANN's action was taken despite widespread and significant objections raised throughout the process by many in the global community of Internet users. ICANN's decision was not made in the public interest, does not promote consumer trust, and does not benefit the public, as required in the Affirmation of Commitments between ICANN and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

Moreover, additional facts have come to light since ICANN announced the most recent iteration of the Applicant Guidebook – including rounds of troubling conflict of interest questions – which cast a shadow over the entire process leading up to ICANN's decision. Those facts, combined with the current state of the global economy, raise substantial issues regarding the wisdom of moving forward with ICANN's plan, given its undisputed costs and its merely putative benefits.

The ICANN Proposal would unduly burden a diverse range of public and private brand holders, as they would be forced to spend ever-greater amounts of time and resources simply to protect their brands. In addition, there is an unacceptably high risk that the ICANN plan would confuse consumers, increase the already unacceptable level of fraud and identity theft on the Internet, create new opportunities for Internet crime, and jeopardize cyber security.

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Businesses and not-for-profits alike have repeatedly raised these issues with ICANN over the last four years, with no acceptable resolution.

For these reasons, we respectfully call on the Department of Commerce and, specifically the NTIA, to persuade ICANN to postpone the opening of the top-level domain application window unless or until such time as ICANN convincingly demonstrates that unlimited TLD name expansion would:

- Promote consumer trust;
- Enhance Internet security;
- Promote widespread economic benefits across diverse economic sectors and stakeholders; and
- Demonstrate that these benefits will exceed the costs that such gTLD expansion would inevitably impose on the global Internet community.

Respectfully submitted,



Kim Roberts Hedgpeth
National Executive Director
AFTRA, AFL-CIO