

January 21, 2010

The Honorable Olympia Snowe
United States Senator
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Snowe:

On behalf of the U.S. Public Policy Council for the Association for Computing Machinery (USACM), thank you for requesting our support and comments on your legislation, S. 2881, The FCC Commissioners' Technical Resource Enhancement Act. We support this legislation and have two suggestions for changes for your consideration.

With over 100,000 members worldwide, the Association for Computing Machinery is the largest scientific society for computing in the world. USACM is ACM's technology policy arm – providing non-partisan analysis and advice from leaders across the fields of computing and computation. USACM has a deep interest and expertise in technology policy issues and a history of engagement with policymakers.

Technology and policy issues are deeply intertwined with the ever-increasing role of computing in our society. Privacy and security of personal information, intellectual property, and broadband deployment are just a few issues where either technology is driving policy or the policy is shaping technology. To better serve the public, policymakers should look to technical experts to inform them on complex policy issues. Educating policymakers about technology's potential and limits is one of the reasons why USACM was established. We support building a technical advising capacity in government agencies, and, in particular, support the approach in the FCC Commissioners' Technical Resources Enhancement Act.

We have two recommendations that would improve the legislation. First, we recommend changing the qualifications language so the technical expert has recognized expertise, e.g. an advanced degree in computer science, electrical engineering, or a related field. An individual with such recognized expertise (rather than just having an undergraduate degree) should be able to effectively advise and support the Commission in its work. Second, if prior law does not address conflicts of interest, we recommend including language limiting potential conflicts. The position should require that the technical expert not have been employed by a regulated firm, an industry lobbying group, or a law firm representing either such entity, for a minimum of three years before appointment. This requirement would help minimize the appearance of – and potential for – conflicts of interest.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation, and for your support of the technical capacity of the Federal Communications Commission. If you have any questions,



ACM US Public
Policy Council

please feel free to contact me or Cameron Wilson, Director of Public Policy for ACM, at 202 659-9711 or cameron.wilson@acm.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eugene H. Spafford".

Eugene H. Spafford, Ph.D
Chair, U.S. Public Policy Council of the Association for Computing Machinery
Executive Director of CERIAS, Purdue University

ABOUT ACM and USACM

ACM, the Association for Computing Machinery is the world's largest educational and scientific computing society, uniting computing educators, researchers and professionals to inspire dialogue, share resources and address the field's challenges. The ACM U.S. Public Policy Council (USACM) serves as the focal point for ACM's interaction with U.S. government organizations, the computing community, and the U.S. public in all matters of U.S. public policy related to information technology. USACM responds to requests for information and technical expertise from U.S. government agencies and departments, seeks to influence relevant U.S. government policies on behalf of the computing community and the public, and provides information to ACM on relevant U.S. government activities.