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SIIA Commends House Subcommittee Hearing on ICANN

Widespread Concerns Remain with Roll out of New gTLDs; Continued US Government-ICANN Partnership Essential

WASHINGTON, DC (September 23, 2009) – The Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA), the principal association of the software and digital content industries, today praised the House Subcommittee on Courts and Competition Policy for holding an oversight hearing on the "Expansion of Top Level Domains and its Effects on Competition."

"The hearing comes at an important juncture in the relationship of the US Government and ICANN," said Mark Bohannon, SIIA's General Counsel and SVP Public Policy. "Despite some steps to fulfill its commitments under the current Joint Project Agreement, terminating the partnership is, at best, premature and would be misguided."

"It is critical to examine how the partnership between ICANN and the US Government should continue so as to improve ICANN's governance and work and to meet the challenges ahead," Bohannon continued.

One of the key challenges facing ICANN is the roll out of new generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs), which has raised enormous concerns and questions from a wide variety of stakeholders who depend on a predictable and secure DNS. Today's hearing focuses on one of the four key issues – the economic analysis of the demand and market for gTLDs – that must be addressed before this initiative moves forward.

"By any measure, the economic report prepared by ICANN falls short of resolving this critical issue," Bohannon said. "It is *not* the study that the ICANN Board voted to undertake in 2006, and – based on our deep experience in working with economic experts in this area – the quality of the study is very poor. This key issue remains unresolved, and ICANN should start from scratch with a thorough and credible examination.

SIIA has commented extensively on the inadequacy of ICANN addressing four key issues, even as ICANN continues to set a short timeline for accepting applications. In addition to the economic analysis, the other issues include how the rollout will address: security and stability; malicious conduct; and the treatment of brands and trademarks.

"The continued effort to push the rollout of new gTLDs in the face of significant concerns and unresolved issues is indicative of why continued partnership between the US government and ICANN is essential," SIIA's Bohannon stated. "The model of ICANN remains an important hallmark of internet governance. But, as it stands today, the organization remains highly dependent on revenue from precisely the entities that it seeks to oversee, the registrars and registries, and is susceptible to takeover by a select group of stakeholders to the detriment of the entire Internet community."

About SIIA

The Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA) is the principal trade association for the software and digital content industry. SIIA provides global services in government relations, business development, corporate education and intellectual property protection to more than 500 leading software and information companies. For further information, visit www.siia.net.

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