

The Policy Blueprint for the People's Internet

Reclaiming the Promise of Connected, Democratic Societies

We recognize that the original promise of the Internet — a decentralized, democratizing tool to expand opportunity and empower individuals — has not been fulfilled.

We believe:

1. That an internet economy controlled by Big Tech and built on commercializing personal data and attention, compounded by accelerating use of AI, has denied individuals control over their data and frayed the fabric of society by intensifying political polarization, undermining free expression, threatening privacy, and eroding trust in elections and institutions;
2. That the strength and size of incumbent digital platforms have locked citizens of nearly every democracy into a troubling tradeoff between their rights to connect and know and their right to autonomy;
3. That the global competition between an expanding democratic world and authoritarian adversaries has intensified, with the internet serving both as a powerful force and an increasingly crucial arena in this contest;
4. That we as individuals should have control of our digital identities and personal data without relying on private platforms;
5. That the economic, social, and political benefits we are realizing from the internet today represent only a fraction of its true potential;
6. That a new paradigm that empowers individuals, frees and connects people, and establishes durable and productive incentives is needed;
7. That a People's Internet will require the active engagement of all citizens—policymakers, technologists, advocates, parents, thought leaders—and new solutions, from innovative technologies to ambitious policies; and
8. That there is an overwhelming, cross-partisan, international interest in an information ecosystem that is not defined or dominated by a few social media and advertising firms; is safe for kids and teens; that puts citizens back in control of their information; and contributes to a healthy democracy while sustaining a vibrant, competitive and growing economy.

Therefore, we are committed to delivering a People's Internet that puts people and communities at its center.

Our Vision

The Blueprint for the People's Internet will help people take back control of their digital lives by reclaiming a **choice**, **voice**, and **stake** in a better internet.

Choice:

People will control their identity, data, and online experiences.

When people have greater control over their identity and individual experience online and expanded opportunities to manage their data, they can make informed decisions about everything from their privacy and safety to which spaces they choose to participate in. This is digital self-determination, and it is the fundamental principle of the internet we deserve. It centers on people, not platforms. It protects personal identity and data. It values freedom across the web, not consolidation of power within any one platform.

Voice:

People will have a meaningful say in how their online communities operate.

When people can act as digital citizens entrusted to shape the governance of the spaces they rely on every day, they can create platforms and applications driven by societal value and transparency instead of corporate profits, black-box algorithms, and Big Tech's choices about what they see or say. This is digital citizenship, and it is the set of collective responsibilities undertaken by

people who embody digital self-determination to build a civic architecture of spaces, platforms, tools, and practices that put into action the principles of openness, safety, privacy, accountability, transparency, and ownership.

Stake:

People will access the economics of the internet, giving them control and the ability to monetize their data.

The platform-take-all business models of today's internet are not equitable, long-term models. The economic value from big data and major network effects stem from the contributions, activity, and content of everyday people, and yet that value is not shared. An internet that resembles a representative democracy is an internet whose economic value is distributed fairly. This is digital ownership. It is the economic model compatible with a system of digital self-determination and digital citizenship. And yet, today we lack the models where people can participate in the economic value of their data and online contributions. Enabling true competition between platforms will enable innovation to generate new economic models for the future.

Our Principles

1. People Should Control Their Identity, Data, and Online Experiences:

We must shift to a people-centric internet where individuals have personal decision-making power over their digital life and the personal information that animates it — deciding who has access to what information, on what terms, and retaining the right to revoke that access.

2. Social Networks Are Interoperable and Compete Fairly:

We must restore a competitive and open internet by enabling comprehensive data portability and enabling different platforms to work together seamlessly, while realigning the economic incentives for internet platforms.

3. Children Are Healthy, Safe, and Can Grow Online:

We act to safeguard children from the physical and emotional harms magnified by the attention economy, while protecting their privacy and free speech.

4. The Consensus for a Rights-First Internet is Globally Shared:

Democracies must come together to create an internet that respects democratic values and individual rights.

A Policy Template for the Next Four Years

The public interest in this vision is clear; the public policy to achieve it will require steps that are widely understood; draw on existing law; and in many cases are ready for action by U.S. lawmakers and policymakers at the State and Federal level. To achieve this vision:

In Domestic Policy, fix Social Media to Open Up a New Internet Paradigm

...to ensure social media platforms are interoperable and compete on respect for individuals, in fair terms:

- Affirm the Right to Data Portability — via (1) an FTC Rule elaborating on requirements for social media customers to be able to easily transfer their data between platforms and establishing that the absence of these capabilities constitutes anti-competitive conduct; and (2) codify those expectations with amendments to law paralleling EU GDPR Art. 20§1-2.
- Affirm the Right to Reclaim Social Graph Data— via an FTC Rule affirming that it shall be an Art. 5 unfair trade practice to (1) prevent a customer from securing portable social graph data (a person’s network of online connections and interactions) in any form other than those fully interoperable with existing and emerging competitors; (2) to omit “social graph” data concerning interactions and performance; (3) to prohibit archiving on a consistent basis; and (4) not fully remove from both view and ongoing utilization all citizen-provided content and social graph data (including interactions) upon request.
- Develop/adopt an Interoperability Standard— via a NIST-initiated, fast-tracked (180-day) process — leveraging results from a new FTC Section 6(B) Order and existing open-source standards — to foster harmonized standards for enabling platforms to work together seamlessly so that the industry will be positioned to adopt standards that satisfy the two rights above.
- Harness Distributed Systems for Better Data Stewardship — via a new Executive Order charting a modern way forward on blockchain and digital asset policy, and to ground independent agency and legislative conclusions in the new era, clarifying that distributed ledgers used by individuals to merely store data are mismatched to securities regulations and to ensure decentralized systems can be employed for storage of individuals’ digital identities and personal data outside of a specific private platform.

- Restore Researchers' and Civil Society's Access to Social Media Metrics — run by the NTIA and with cybersecurity, privacy, and legal safe harbor protections in place, to allow researchers to understand, document, and hold to account platforms shirking their responsibilities on harms to society and kids, and compliance with protection of individuals.
- Identify New Approaches to Platform Liability — by re-examining the scope of Section 230 of the Communications Act of 1934 to ensure platforms take responsibility for their products, while preserving all the protections of the First Amendment for the social media environment.
- Explore Reinventing the Structures that Oversee Abuses — by revisiting the diffusion of responsibility amongst diverse federal agencies for regulating Big Tech's excesses.

...to ensure children are healthy, safe, and can grow online:

- Develop and Enforce a Ban on Targeted Advertising to Kids — with a simple, strict statutory prohibition — with private right of action — on the combined collection and use of data to advertise to kids and devices known to be used by kids.
- Ensure Kids and Parents Have Immediate and Verifiable Rights of Deletion on Minors' Content — through a new statute that also makes onward sale of social graph data on kids strictly prohibited by law.
- Require Platforms and Device Manufacturers to Implement Robust, Privacy-Protecting Age Verification and Parental Consent Systems — by revising COPPA's "actual knowledge" standard for platforms' responsibility, ensuring kids can be safe online without requiring individuals to provide even more sensitive personal information to platforms.

...to safeguard our privacy in the coming age of AI...

- Establish Strict Ownership of Biometrics and Other Immutable Identifiers — it's simple: if you can't change it, an online platform can't keep or sell it. Legislation must protect individual control over these basic identifiers, while ensuring physical devices with appropriate security can still use biometric security when that data is never shared.
- Establish Algorithmic Visibility and Opt-Out on Social Media — enshrining in statute that consumers have the right to plain-English explanations of why they are being targeted ("why this content?") and the ability to opt-out to generic (e.g. chronological) curation.

In U.S. Foreign Policy, Consolidate Consensus Around the Rights-First Internet Paradigm

...to restore the international consensus around an Internet Fit for Democracies...

- Recommit to a Single, Global Internet — in international statements, standard-setting efforts, and multilateral efforts to establish rules of the road; recognizing that authoritarian regimes that embrace internet censorship will remain outliers.
- Strategically Harness Foreign Assistance for People-Centric Digital Capacity-Building — using funds like those administered by State/CDP and multilateral organizations like the ASEAN, OAS, ECOWAS, and AUC to develop technical pilots and governance infrastructure this new paradigm demands.
- Establish a Rights-First Digital Trade Regime — ensuring that rights-respecting digital trade will receive priority, injecting existing and to-be-negotiated agreements with commitments to the same domestic rights, tools, and safeguards above — while resuming WTO talks under this new banner.
- Focus the US-EU Digital Relationship on this Shared Vision for the Future — focus the US-EU Trade & Technology Council on taking concrete steps, on regulatory interoperability and oversight, to achieve a single unified market for such rights-respecting platforms.
- Unite Open Societies in Harmonizing Future-Forward Internet Policies — since the size of the market will help motivate a rights-respecting alternative, governments should drive bilateral and multilateral agendas to formally enshrine reciprocal guarantees.