



June 5, 2013

Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Room S 128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Richard Shelby  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Room S 146A, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby,

We write as a diverse group of organizations and individuals to strongly support the time-sensitive Internet freedom recommendations contained in the April 10 letter written by Senator Roy Blunt and Congressman Frank Wolf to members and senior staff of the Board of Broadcasting Governors [BBG]. In our view, the BBG initiative called for by the Wolf-Blunt letter to bypass the Internet firewalls of today's closed society regimes can greatly and peacefully advance the cause of freedom throughout the world. Further: Given that the letter's recommendations can be implemented by reorienting the BBG's budget priorities, and without the expenditure of additional Federal funds, our commitment to the Blunt-Wolf recommendations is made the more determined.

Repeated statements and actions of closed society regimes confirm that today's Internet firewall systems are 21<sup>st</sup> century equivalents of the brick and barbed wire Berlin Walls of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As such, the Wolf-Blunt letter is a call to achieve peaceful, historic change on behalf of political, cultural and religious freedom. In the latter case, we note and fully associate ourselves with the comment of former Secretary of State Clinton that "connection technologies like the internet and social networking sites should enhance individuals' ability to worship as they see fit, come together with people of their own faith, and learn more about the beliefs of others," and her statement that "[w]e must work to advance freedom of worship online just as we do in other areas of life." We likewise identify ourselves with the goal announced last April by President Obama, when he noted that "The United States will continue to draw attention to the electronic curtain that is cutting the Iranian people off from the world," and spoke of the need to "advance a

basic freedom for the Iranian people: the freedom to connect with one another and with their fellow human beings.”

The BBG now dedicates less than 2% of its budget to anti-Internet censorship activities and as the Wolf-Blunt letter makes clear, such an underinvestment of resources is unacceptable. Likewise, we endorse the Wolf-Blunt request for the BBG to determine the feasibility and cost of deploying technology that would enable safe and uncensored interactive public meetings with large numbers of participants – including meetings conducted via mobile devices. This is a step the BBG should immediately undertake and, if reasonably possible, commit to making happen this fiscal year.

We stand ready to discuss with Members of Congress the need to make the Internet an instrument of freedom, and to make clear why rapid implementation of the Blunt-Wolf recommendations is an urgent step that should now to be taken.

Respectfully,

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President, National Association of Evangelicals

Dr. Russell Moore  
President, Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

David Saperstein  
Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Ron Sider  
President, Evangelicals For Social Action

Most Reverend John C. Wester  
Chair, Committee on Communications, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

C. Naseer Ahmad  
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Mustafa Akhwand  
Director, Shia Rights Watch

Bishop Andrew of Pavlovskoye  
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Maggie Ardiente  
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CC:

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