



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**ACTIVISTS TO COMMERCE DEPARTMENT: DON'T GIVE AWAY U.S. CYBERSPACE ADDRESS!**

Twenty public interest organizations and academics today urged the Commerce Department to think of the public before giving away the United State's cyberspace address, ".us." In a letter addressed to the Acting Administrator of the National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) the coalition requested that NTIA:

- Prohibit the private, for-profit corporation Network Solutions, Inc. (NSI) from making any changes to the .us namespace (NSI has recently assumed operational management of .us); and
- Commence a new proceeding to focus on the public interest aspects of NTIA's proposal to re-delegate management of the .us domain.

The letter states: "NTIA administers the .us ccTLD on behalf of the American people...No one would seriously propose that the United States government simply give away the .us domain, the collective cyberspace identity of the American people, yet...NTIA may simply dispose of this valuable national resource with little public debate...At the least, NTIA has a responsibility to ensure that the American people recoup at least some of the vast potential revenues [the space may generate]. Further public proceedings to consider these issues fully must take place before any changes take place in the .us space, whether by... NTIA or by unilateral action on the part

In addition to the familiar "generic" top level domains -- .com, .org, and .net -- every country has a two-letter "country code" top level domain (called a "ccTLD"). The United States' code is ".us." NTIA oversees management of the .us domain and domain names generally. Most users of .us addresses are state and local governments, libraries, and schools, representatives of which are among the signatories. A list of signatories is attached.

In August 2000, NTIA began a proceeding on future management of .us. The comment period closed on October 6, 2000. In November 2000, NSI assumed operational control of .us from the non-profit organization that previously ran it. (NSI, a subsidiary of publicly traded Verisign, Inc., also operates the .com, .org, and .net registries.)

Text of the letter is available at the Benton web site, <http://www.benton.org/Policy/US/docletter.html>, and the MAP website, [http://www.mediaaccess.org/whats\\_new/docletter.html](http://www.mediaaccess.org/whats_new/docletter.html)

Since 1981, the **Benton Foundation** has worked to realize the social benefits made possible by the public interest use of communications. Through its projects, the foundation seeks to shape the emerging communications environment in the public interest. <http://www.Benton.org>

**Media Access Project** is a twenty-eight year old non-profit, public interest law firm which promotes the public's First Amendment right to hear and be heard on the electronic media of today and tomorrow. <http://www.mediaaccess.org>.

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February 1, 2001

**20 Signatories of Letter to Department of Commerce regarding .US Namespace,**

February 1, 2001

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