

Technology and Innovation

The 14th Congressional District is home to much of Silicon Valley and many of the world's foremost technology and telecommunications innovators, who have led the world in developing the innovations and discoveries that continue to shape our society and lead our economy. As the representative of Silicon Valley, Congresswoman Eshoo led the fight to create uniform standards limiting frivolous lawsuits, saving investors and the high-tech industry billions of dollars. Representative Eshoo's bill authorizing electronic signatures brought commerce into the digital age and was the model for digital signatures by the European Union. As a founding member of the Congressional Internet Caucus, she created a program to provide discounts to schools and libraries for Internet access. More recently, Congresswoman Eshoo led the House Democrats in putting together "The Innovation Agenda: A Commitment to Keep America #1," a comprehensive policy agenda to ensure America remains competitive and continues to lead the world in innovation.

Representative Eshoo is a leader in Congress on issues affecting high-technology, the Internet, and health science, and is committed to ensuring that the U.S. continues to lead the world in these critical fields in the 21st Century.

In this section:

[The Innovation Agenda: A Commitment to Keep America #1](#)

[Broadband Deployment](#)

[Broadband Video and Net Neutrality](#)

[E-911](#)

[911 Resolution](#)

[Internet Tax Moratorium](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Patent Reform](#)

[Free Wireless Broadband for the Nation](#)

[Loud Commercials](#)

[Media Consolidation and Broadcaster Public Interest Obligations](#)

[The Innovation Agenda: A Commitment to Keep America #1](#)

In November 2005, Rep. Eshoo joined with the House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and other colleagues to launch

the Innovation Agenda: A Commitment to Competitiveness to Keep America #1. This agenda was developed after extensive consultation with America's leaders in high-technology, biotechnology, venture capital, and academia beginning in the 14th Congressional District at Stanford University. Subsequent meetings were held around the country with private-sector leaders to seek their views and to develop a plan for our nation to remain competitive and keep us number one.

The House Democrats made a commitment to the following with the Innovation Agenda:

- Greatly increase our investments in research and development (R&D), including doubling National Science Foundation (NSF) funding and modernizing and making permanent the R&D tax credit;
- Improve education in science and math and make college accessible to any student who is qualified to attend;
- Provide universal broadband access for all Americans in five years;
- Achieve energy independence in ten years;
- Promote opportunities for small business and innovative startups, ensuring access to venture capital, improving the patent system, and reducing healthcare costs.

These are among the most important issues we face as a country and we will need to work together - as Democrats and Republicans - to preserve America's leadership in innovation and technology. With new leadership in Congress and the full commitment of the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, these issues will be at the forefront of the congressional agenda.

-

Read and learn more about the Innovation Agenda.

-

Watch the Innovation Agenda press conference.

Broadband Deployment

With the acquisition of BellSouth by AT&T, it's clear that the telecom wars surrounding the 1996 Telecommunications Act are concluding with the reformation of Ma Bell. Decisions by the federal courts and the FCC to deny reasonable local loop access to competitive telephone providers doomed any prospect of local wireline telephone competition. The mergers that followed these decisions are the final shovels of dirt on the efforts of Congress to engender local telephone competition in the '96 Act.

With the completion of the AT&T-BellSouth merger, AT&T and Verizon together serve more than 60% of the households in America. While the Bells are likely to become increasingly competitive with cable companies in offering broadband, voice and video services, the cable industry is also highly concentrated within regional markets, and the vast majority of consumers are now able to choose only a single cable provider.

What's happened to our nation's progress in promoting advanced communications while the Bells have been busy eliminating local and long distance phone competition and consolidating the telecom industry?

The situation could hardly be bleaker: The United States has fallen from 4th to 15th in broadband penetration worldwide since 2001.

As the country that led the world in innovation for the past century, invented the telephone and developed the Internet, this is a sad state of affairs. Some of our competitors - such as China, South Korea, and India - have avoided many of the problems associated with advanced telecommunications deployment because their existing infrastructures were extremely limited. They haven't had to manage a difficult transition from vast telephone networks to broadband. Instead, they've gone straight to a high-speed, fiber-optic infrastructure.

On the other hand, a number of countries currently outpacing the U.S. in broadband deployment (such as Japan and several European countries) have chosen to adopt essentially the opposite broadband policies to those currently being implemented here, including broadband universal service policies and market-opening regulations. Rep. Eshoo has repeatedly expressed concerns that Presidential leadership on broadband has been non-existent, and the Federal Communications Commission has focused almost exclusively on promoting "market-based" solutions that ignore the market power of entrenched incumbents.

Our country can no longer sit idly by while the rest of the world runs circles around us in the rollout of advanced communications services and universal broadband. Telecommunications is the "central nervous system" of the entire economy and high speed, always-on broadband Internet communications will enable a vast array of advanced Internet applications and services including Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), video on-demand, electronic health, and distance education. The United States' ability to deploy this advanced communications infrastructure is crucial to our future productivity and will in large part determine our ability to succeed in the global information economy.

It's essential for the President and Congress to come together to formulate a comprehensive strategy to address this urgent priority and put our country back on the path to leadership in this critical sector.

[Read Rep. Eshoo's speech on broadband deployment to the Economic Strategy Institute .](#)

[Read Rep. Eshoo's op-ed on broadband in Roll Call.](#)

The agenda of the Telecom Subcommittee in 2007 will be dominated by efforts to enact legislation to promote broadband access to all Americans and ensure that Internet users have access to the content of their choice.

During the Committee's debate on these issues, Rep. Eshoo is a leader of efforts to enact meaningful protections for network neutrality or "Net Neutrality." Net Neutrality refers to the debate over actions by broadband service providers to provide discriminatory access to Internet content and services by providing faster, higher quality broadband service for content they offer themselves or through their affiliates and partners.

This issue is of tremendous concern to Internet companies such as Google, Yahoo!, eBay, Apple, and Amazon as they seek to roll out new services, as well as a wide array of colleges and universities, consumer groups, and organizations dedicated to freedom of expression. Most importantly, Net Neutrality will ensure that the next Google or eBay can have a chance to compete in the Internet marketplace. Without strong Net Neutrality protections, the open architecture of the Internet that has allowed innovation on the Net to thrive will be replaced by "walled gardens" controlled by the large Bell and cable companies.

Rep. Eshoo believes that strong Net Neutrality rules must be written into any broadband reform legislation, and will continue to fight to preserve the free and open Internet. She has cosponsored H.R. 5353, the Internet Freedom Preservation Act, which will ensure that network operators do not discriminate among content providers and frustrate consumer freedom.

Eshoo Net Neutrality Statement for F.C.C. Hearing at Stanford.

Read Rep. Eshoo's op-ed on Net Neutrality in the San Jose Mercury News.

Learn more about Net Neutrality at <http://www.savetheinternet.com/> .

E-911

As Co-Chair of the Congressional E-911 Caucus Rep. Eshoo was the lead Democratic sponsor of the ENHANCE 911 Act, legislation to upgrade our nation's emergency 911 system to allow emergency operators to locate callers on mobile telephones. The ENHANCE 911 Act was signed into law in December of 2004, and is designed to speed Enhanced 911 implementation and improve coordination among all levels of government by providing significant seed money to address and promote best practices and technology innovations. The funding will ensure that Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) are ready to deploy vital call answering equipment for all technologies. The law authorizes \$250 million in matching grants for states, local governments and tribal organizations to improve their 911 communications systems, hire and train more personnel, and purchase equipment, and Rep. Eshoo is leading efforts in Congress to fully fund this critical program.

911 Resolution

Rep. Eshoo sponsored a resolution that passed the House that will increase national awareness about the importance and appropriate use of 9-1-1 services.

The legislation, H.Res. 537, supports the designation of one month each year as "National 9-1-1 Education Month." The designation would encourage the development of annual public awareness events, public advertising campaigns, targeted outreach to schools, and training activities for parents and teachers to ensure that all Americans can access these critical services in an emergency.

Internet Tax Moratorium

Passage of the Internet Tax Freedom Act of 1998, created a temporary moratorium on Internet access taxes as well as discriminatory or duplicative taxes on e-commerce. The moratorium was established to encourage universal access to the Internet as well as help promote e-commerce. This policy has been a resounding success, fostering growth in productivity and innovation and widening public access to information. This moratorium has been extended several times since its original inception with the latest extension set to expire in November of this year.

Rep. Eshoo believes strongly that an extension of this moratorium is critical to the continued growth of both availability of Internet access as well as the breadth of online services. In January 2007, Rep. Eshoo introduced H.R. 743, the Permanent Internet Tax Freedom Act of 2007. This legislation permanently extends the temporary Internet tax moratorium assuring consumers that their Internet access and e-commerce will remain unhindered by discriminatory and duplicative taxes. On May 23, 2007, Rep. Eshoo testified in favor of the Permanent Internet Tax Freedom Act before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

The House did not consider Rep. Eshoo's legislation and initially voted on October 16th for a bill which would have extended the moratorium only four years. Rep. Eshoo was one of only two House members to vote against the bill. The Senate then amended the bill to increase the moratorium to seven years. On October 30th Eshoo voted for and the House gave final approval to H.R. 3678, the Internet Tax Freedom Act Amendments of 2007. The seven-year moratorium is the longest extension ever approved by Congress.

The President signed the bill into law on October 31st and invited Rep. Eshoo to attend the signing ceremony in the Oval Office. (l-to-r: Rep. Bob Goodlatte of Virginia, Rep. Lamar Smith of Texas, Sen. John Sununu of New Hampshire, President Bush, Rep. Chris Cannon of Utah, Rep. Eshoo, Sen. Tom Carper of Delaware and Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee. White House photo by Eric Draper.)

- Eshoo Applauds Seven-Year Extension of Internet Tax Moratorium
- Eshoo Introduces Permanent Internet Tax Freedom Act
- Eshoo's Testimony Before the Senate Commerce Committee
- Eshoo Testifies on HR 743 before House Judiciary Subcommittee (Windows Media Player)

Privacy

The issue of personal privacy is one that the American people feel to the core of their being. When any of us provide an institution with personal information, we want to be sure that the information is used in the narrowest sense, and that the information will be protected from misuse or theft. At a minimum, companies should be required to disclose if they buy or sell consumer information or if they track the whereabouts of Internet surfers even after they've left a company's website. Consumers should be given the opportunity to opt-out of this use of their information.

There is a growing need for protection of individual privacy, and as a Member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Rep. Eshoo will be actively involved in congressional efforts to implement sound, strong privacy laws to protect consumers and prevent fraud and identity theft. Through the combined efforts of government and industry, Rep. Eshoo hopes to develop privacy legislation that will give consumers control over their own privacy and require the private sector to be a responsible steward of their personal information.

As part of these efforts, Rep. Eshoo has cosponsored a package of legislation to address pressing issues related to consumer privacy, data security, and identity theft:

- H.R. 936, the Prevention of Fraudulent Access to Phone Records Act, prohibits the "pretexting" of phone records and enhances security requirements for customer phone records and network information. Pretexting involves using fraud or deception to obtain access to customer phone records from the telephone carrier. The most notorious example of this practice came to light in connection with the investigation by Hewlett-Packard's Board of Directors into leaks by members of the Board.

- H.R. 948, the Social Security Number Protection Act, strengthens the authority of the federal government to protect individuals from abusive acts and practices in the sale and purchase of Social Security numbers.

- H.R. 958, the Data Accountability and Trust Act (or DATA), protects consumers by requiring any entity engaged in interstate commerce to have reasonable security policies and procedures to protect data containing personal information, and to provide for nationwide notice in the event of a security breach.

- H.R. 964, the Securely Protect Yourself Against Cyber Trespass Act (or SPY ACT), protects users of the Internet from unknowing transmission of the personally identifiable information through spyware programs.

Patent Reform

Our patent system currently suffers from a large backlog in processing patents and many have expressed concerns that the Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) needs additional expertise and resources to keep pace with the rapid innovation of the 21st Century. While additional investments in the PTO were made in the last Congress, additional reforms are needed to ensure that the PTO and the U.S. patent system are sound over the long term.

In order to ensure that our patent system is able to respond to the rapid pace of innovation, it's important for Congress to establish a better balance between the needs of innovators to produce new products without the burden of unnecessary patent litigation and the interests of inventors in their legitimate intellectual property. Rep. Eshoo has cosponsored H.R. 1908, the Patent Reform Act (PRA) of 2007, to reform and strengthen the patent review process and the patent litigation system.

Intellectual property has become the core of the American economy and it's critical for Congress to ensure that the patent system promotes innovation and invention, rather than confusion and litigation. The reforms implemented by H.R. 1908 will enable greater research and development of new technologies, stimulating the economy and creating new, high-paynig jobs.

[Return to Top](#)

Free Wireless Broadband for the Nation

Rep. Eshoo introduced H.R. 5846 the Wireless Internet Nationwide for Families Act (WIN) which, if enacted, would foster the deployment of a new nation-wide wireless broadband network.

The WIN Act directs that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) auction certain spectrum that is currently lying fallow. The winner of the auction would be required to build and complete a network within 10 years that must provide coverage to at least 95% of our country. The licensee would also be required to provide service for free to consumers and public safety users. The WIN Act also requires the licensee to deny access to obscene and indecent material on the free service tier.

Loud Commercials

Rep. Eshoo introduced the H.R. 6209, the Commercial Advertisement Loudness Mitigation Act (CALM Act) to address loud commercials. The bill would direct the FCC to enact within one year rules requiring that television advertisements not be excessively noisy.

Most Americans are not overjoyed to watch television commercials, but they are willing to tolerate them to sustain free

over-the-air television. What annoys all of us is the sudden increase of volume when commercials are aired.

A TV program has a mix of audio levels. There are loud and soft parts. Nuance is used to build the dramatic effect. Most advertisers don't want nuance. They want to grab our attention, and to do this, they record every part of it as loud as possible. This legislation will reduce the volume of commercials in order to bring them to same level as the programs they accompany.

Media Consolidation and Broadcaster Public Interest Obligations

On December 19, 2007 Rep. Eshoo introduced the H.R.4882, Broadcast Licensing in the Public Interest Act. This bill would strengthen public interest obligations on broadcasters.

Rep. Eshoo has become increasingly concerned about the effect of media ownership on our democracy. The corporatization of our media and the massive consolidation of media outlets are the root cause of the erosion in public discourse in this country.

Television stations devote less than one half of one percent of total programming time to local public affairs. Four out of ten commercial TV stations surveyed in 2003 aired no local public affairs programs. 92% of the election coverage aired by the national networks in the two weeks before Election Day 2004 was devoted to the presidential contest leaving only 8% for local elections and referendums.

The Federal Communications Commission relaxed its long-standing cross ownership rules amid public outcry to maintain the ban on owning a radio or television station and a newspaper in the same market.

The relaxed ownership rules and rubber-stamped postcard license renewals have contributed to the degradation of television and radio programming. When a broadcaster receives a license they are investing in public responsibility and service.

The Communications Act of 1934, as amended, requires broadcasters to serve the "public interest, convenience, and necessity." However the Act does not specify how the "public interest" is best served. The Broadcast Licensing in the Public Interest Act requires broadcasters to demonstrate a dedication to specified public interest obligations. The bill requires broadcast licensees seeking a renewal to demonstrate that they have made a dedication to civic affairs of its community and to local news gathering. The bill also mandates that broadcasters air locally produced programming and make a commitment to provide a public presentation of the views of candidates and issues related to local, statewide or national elections. Finally, the bill mandates that broadcasters provide quality educational programming for children and reduces a broadcast license term from eight years to three. The three-year term will bring greater oversight and scrutiny to license renewals.

