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Lawmakers, Groups Lay Out Priorities for Biden Administration

Lawmakers and trade groups reacting to the election of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris are stressing the importance of bolstering broadband deployment and addressing various technology issues while acknowledging the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) called the election results the "dawning of a new day of hope for America" and contended that Mr. Biden's administration would be operating under a "mandate" from voters for, among other things, "creating bigger paychecks by rebuilding America's infrastructure."

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D., Md.) said the House will focus on passing "broadly popular" legislation focused on "rebuilding our infrastructure."

Such legislation, he said, would lead to "good jobs" and expanded access to education and jobs training.

"I urge the Senate to be a partner in this endeavor and help restore faith among the American people that our democracy can deliver the results they seek and the better future they deserve," Mr. Hoyer said.

Mr. Hoyer also urged the Senate to reach an agreement with the House on a new coronavirus relief package, and for Mr. Trump to sign it.

USTelecom released a five-point, 100-day action plan it thinks the Biden administration and the next Congress should pursue.

"The first 100 days of a new administration and new Congress are critical to charting a clear, bipartisan course for our nation's policy agenda," USTelecom President and Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Spalter said. "Whatever the challenge—COVID-19, economic recovery, racial equity, climate change, healthcare, education, job creation, or national security—broadband can and must play an essential role in any plan to lift Americans up and move our nation forward."

The plan's priorities include:

(1) "Finish the Job of Connecting Every American" by advancing legislation to "fully invest in the broadband infrastructure required to rapidly and permanently close the digital divide in America"'

(2) "Tackle Broadband Affordability—Starting with Our Kids," by taking action to "[l]aunch and fast-track a major initiative that makes public resources available to ensure low-income students and all at-risk Americans" have broadband access at home;

(3) "Any New Online Consumer Protections Must Be Modern, Consistent, and National" by insisting on "consistent national approaches so consumers across the country can trust they have equal protections under the law and companies can invest with the confidence that our nation will continue its global leadership under a cohesive, national innovation policy";

(4) "Strengthen Global Leadership on Cybersecurity" by "quickly" convening a "senior level industry and government team of technology and policy experts to review the effectiveness of major public-private cybersecurity initiatives" and;

(5) "Elevate and Coordinate Technology Policy at the White House" by undertaking a "strategic assessment of how interagency technology policy development and coordination can be improved and streamlined, starting with reconstituting the national cybersecurity policy coordinating function at the White House."

Incompas CEO Chip Pickering said the success of the nation's broadband-related future depends on "our ability to innovate, build, and expand Internet access to all Americans who desperately need faster speeds and lower prices." Incompas looks forward to working with the next administration "on big, bold goals that create a better broadband blueprint for our future," he said.

NTCA CEO Shirley Bloomfield was among those who noted that the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the need for all Americans to have access to affordable broadband services.

"[W]e look forward to working with the administration and Congress to promote sustainable networks that will deliver high-quality services for years to come," she said. "Every American—no matter where he or she lives—deserves the opportunity to have robust, reliable broadband."

ACA President and CEO Matthew Polka pressed the importance his group sees in continuing to expand access to broadband for low-income and rural consumers, particularly in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

"This pandemic has made the powerful case that connectivity is a priority for every family and business," Mr. Polka said. "We look forward to working with everyone in this new Administration to build upon the Herculean efforts our members have made as they continue to serve their customers and communities during the ongoing pandemic."

Mr. Polka also called upon private industry and government to "work together on broadband policies that focus on getting broadband to unserved areas, serving schools and students, enabling remote health services, and providing affordable services for low-income families."

Consumer Technology Association President and CEO Gary Shapiro said the group wants to work with the Biden administration to advance "priorities that promote innovation and competition" in the country.

"Specifically, we look forward to recalibrating our trade policies, promoting free online speech by preserving Section 230 protections, and ensuring all Americans have the access and benefits of high-speed broadband," Mr. Shapiro said. "We are also committed to attracting the best and brightest to work in America through meaningful immigration reform and by training the American workforce on the skills needed to compete in the tech economy."

The Information Technology Industry Council pointed to the importance of recovering from the "economic fallout" of the coronavirus and "revitalizing and growing" the U.S. economy.

"From closing the digital divide to investing in research and development to a renewed collaboration with allies to achieve U.S. trade, economic, and national security objectives, our industry is committed to working constructively with the Biden-Harris Administration to ensure that the United States adopts policies that support the well-being of all Americans," ITI President and CEO Jason Oxman said.

Mr. Oxman was among a few commenters who also mentioned the need for a "peaceful" transition of power from the Trump administration to the Biden administration.

"Doing so is essential to providing certainty and stability to American workers and families and the global business community, and to furthering America's competitiveness around the globe," he said.

The Computer & Communications Industry Association included technology policy as one of the many "crucial" policy matters that the Biden administration will have to grapple with.

In particular, CCIA President Matt Schruers said the group wants to work with the administration on technology policy issues related to innovation, job creation, and U.S. economic growth.

"In these unprecedented times, policies like strengthening commerce and relations with our trading partners, and encouraging broadband access to overcome the digital divide, can create economic opportunity as our nation fights the pandemic and its consequences together," he said.

TechNet President and CEO Linda Moore said that as Mr. Biden takes office, the group's focus "remains on advancing policies that enable inclusive job growth, empower the workforce of tomorrow, ensure our nation's global competitiveness, and promote digital trust."

Ms. Moore said TechNet "stands ready" to work with the Biden administration, Congress, state governors and legislatures, and local officials to "to help control and cure COVID-19, safely reopen our businesses and schools, rebuild our economy, and create jobs and prosperity for all Americans."

The Business Software Alliance (BSA) said it "encourages strong leadership from the incoming Administration and Congress to modernize laws and regulations affecting technology and the growing software workforce."

The group said the government's priorities should include "fostering inclusive growth" through worker training and reskilling programs; expanding technology access; enacting "strong, comprehensive" federal privacy legislation; modernizing government IT systems; and "continuing the United States' global leadership in digital trade."

"COVID-19 presents some of the most complex challenges we've faced in recent history," BSA President and CEO Victoria Espinel said. "We want to work with the Administration and Congress to help move the country through these challenges. This pandemic has underscored the value of software as millions of people everywhere rely on technology to work and learn remotely, connect with loved ones, and access essential services."

National Association of Broadcasters President and CEO Gordon Smith said that the outcome of the vote has been "clear for days" and called for Mr. Trump to "acknowledge the election of Joe Biden and to allow him the chance to bind our nation back together."

In a release, and in a video message to NAB members, Mr. Smith, a former Republican senator from Oregon, noted that he is a friend of Mr. Biden and that they served together on the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee.

NAB will place a priority during the Biden administration on "staunchly defending against harmful policies" that could affect broadcasters and working with lawmakers to, among other things, ensure additional coronavirus-related stimulus is available for broadcasters, Mr. Smith said in the video. —Jeff Williams