

1 October 2015

Candidate Statement - GNSO Council Chair

Candidate: James Bladel (RrSG)

Citizenship/Residence: USA

Dear Glen and Fellow Councilors,

I am honored to be a candidate for the role of GNSO Chair, and would like to thank the Contracted Parties for their nomination and support. If elected I would gladly serve to advance the work of the Council, and represent all stakeholders in the GNSO.

Background

My first exposure to the domain industry and ICANN was in 2007. I understood the role of registries and registrars, but quickly became familiar with other stakeholders. Since then, I have sought to work with others across the community, regardless of whether or not our particular positions aligned. This is even sometimes necessary within my own stakeholder group.

I have participated in numerous PDP's, and have chaired or co-chaired several, which covered topics such as inter-registrar transfers, DNS "fast flux," domain abuse, and recovery of expired names. I contributed to the previous GNSO restructuring effort and worked on groups that ultimately produced the PDP Manual and GNSO Operating Rules, which define many of the processes still in use today.

I have been an elected officer of the Registrar Stakeholder Group (RrSG) since 2011, and was first elected to the GNSO Council in November 2013. Aside from my work in the GNSO, I have been

active in the broader ICANN Community as well. I participated on two Affirmation of Commitment (AoC) review teams: the first Accountability and Transparency Review Team (ATRT1) and the WHOIS Review Team (RT4). Additionally, I was one of the principal negotiators for the 2013 RAA and offered two of its key provisions. Currently, I am involved on the IANA Coordination Group (ICG) and the Accountability Working Group (CCWG-ACCT).

Role of the GNSO Council

It's safe to say that the Council, and the GNSO as a whole, is at an inflection point, but when has that ever not been the case? We are engaged in a great experiment in multi-stakeholder governance. Not every topic or challenge will fit neatly into our existing procedures, and the past can only guide us so far. Success will rest on our ability to be flexible and adaptive when taking on new challenges, without allowing ourselves to become distracted by unnecessary processes. To ensure continued confidence in its work, the GNSO Council must continue to exemplify a model of effective leadership, not only within the scope of our own activities, but as contributing member of the broader community, and potentially an essential element of the post-transition ICANN.

New Challenges

There is no shortage of work ahead of us. Efforts are underway to review the impact of the New gTLD program and provide guidance for the second round of gTLD application. Throughout this process, we must candidly and objectively quantify the program's track record by balancing consumer choice vs. market confusion and innovation vs. the potential for abuse. Sufficient examples exist for both successes and failures, meaning we must encourage the upcoming working group to carefully consider all dependencies.

The next session will also see the launch of work on a successor directory service to replace WHOIS. The proposed RDDS effort is expected to be an enormous undertaking and may ultimately prove to be the most complex work ICANN has done. It will necessitate examination of new concerns about privacy and online surveillance, while reopening old debates about WHOIS accuracy, contractibility,

and registrant eligibility. Aside from abstract questions of policy, the practical considerations of re-engineering a de-centralized WHOIS system will be daunting.

Determining how to disposition proceeds from gTLD auctions is another discussion beginning to take root in the ICANN community. This isn't necessarily a difficult task, but has a troublesome potential to divide the community. We are already hearing an abundance of worthy ideas and proposals, but the funds available, albeit significant, are nevertheless limited. As the source of these auction proceeds, the GNSO must lead the cross-community effort to evaluate proposed use of these funds.

Another ever-present issue is understanding the appropriate role of governments in policymaking. I am encouraged by our recent appointment of Mason Cole as Liaison to the GAC, along with other steps taken to foster a closer relationship with that body and encourage their early participation in the policy development process. The GNSO Council must consider the GAC's positions and advice, and leverage and consult their experts where appropriate. However, the GNSO Council should not be shy about guarding its own remit and pushing back whenever government advice appears to drift in to the realm of gTLD Policy.

Finally, we must recognize and address the problem of community work load and "volunteer burnout". The GNSO Council can lead the outreach effort to connect with new participants and broaden their participation. Attendance at ICANN events is robust, meaning there is a large pool of newcomers who are observing the work of the GNSO and other SO/ACs. We need to get them off the sidelines and into the game, and the best incentive to achieve this is to demonstrate that their work will yield significant and measurable benefits to the community and industry.

Role of the Chair

The GNSO Chair must manage the workload of the Council and help the Council provide an overarching vision for dependent work streams. An effective Chair will help the Council determine its

priorities and manage resource allocation accordingly. The chair must objectively and neutrally moderate discussions, while managing the agenda for all meetings. And finally the chair must equitably represent the common views of all GNSO stakeholders in their interactions with ICANN Staff and other SO/ACs. If elected, I intend to leverage my experience from the commercial sector to focus the the work of the Council on efficiency in operation, and effective outcomes.

Our current Chair, Jonathan Robinson, seems to possess a limitless capacity for taking on new work, and this is more than a little intimidating for one seeking to succeed him. However, I would plan to share more of the anticipated work load with the new Vice Chairs, and other Councilors, to ensure consistent progress towards our shared objectives.

Finally, I am encouraged to know that we will once again be supported by ICANN's GNSO Staff, as these are some of the most capable and professional people I have encountered in my career to date.

In closing, I note that the Non-Contracted Parties have nominated Heather Forest. While we have had few opportunities to work together directly, I have no doubts that Heather would also make a fine GNSO Chair.

Thank you--

James Bladel