



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20463

**STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MATTHEW S. PETERSEN
ON INTERNET COMMUNICATION DISCLAIMERS**

Over the past two decades, the internet has transformed our political process. Federal candidates, parties, and independent actors increasingly rely upon online platforms to communicate with voters and raise campaign funds, while American citizens use internet resources to obtain election-related information and organize. The use of the internet as a tool for political engagement has had a democratizing effect: Low-cost platforms enable speakers with few resources to communicate to large audiences, while a seemingly infinite array of publicly available resources aid the citizenry in casting informed votes. Overall, this development has been a positive one.

The internet's expanding influence on the electoral system has created regulatory challenges, however, as the Commission has grappled with how to apply a law written to address communications transmitted primarily through "our parents and grandparents" television, radio, and print media to speech conducted on computers, tablets, smart phones, and other emerging technologies. For instance, the Commission has previously considered advisory opinions regarding how federal disclaimer requirements apply to character-limited texts, small ads posted on Facebook and Google, and small banner ads on mobile devices. Our current rulemaking on internet communication disclaimers represents the most recent and ambitious effort in this ongoing process.

As we move forward with this rulemaking, its twin goals should be (1) vindicating the informational interest of the American people to know who is sponsoring political ads, and (2) ensuring that online technologies continue to flourish as tools for political speech. To meet these goals, any final rule must be flexible enough to accommodate the numerous devices and platforms by which political speech is delivered, the ways voters consume information online, and the rapid pace of technological innovation. Today's hearing represents an important step towards adapting the Commission's disclaimer regulations to the realities of internet political communications, and I am optimistic that the Commission will be able to successfully complete this task.

I want to thank those who have agreed to testify for their willingness to assist the Commission in better understanding the business of online political advertising, its technical possibilities and limits, and how the federal disclaimer requirement should be applied to internet political communications. I also want to thank the thousands of people and organizations who have submitted comments in this rulemaking and for the thoughts and concerns they have expressed. Finally, I want to thank the staff in the Office of General Counsel for their tremendous efforts in furthering this rulemaking. Their hard work has been indispensable.