What an Obama presidency may mean for Internet Broadband in the US

The election of Barack Obama will likely signify a shift in the US government policies towards technology in general and broadband in particular.

Here, we have tried to summarize the main items from the Obama/Biden Plan relating to technology, as well as relevant news items and other analysis.

The Obama/Biden Plan

Two key items stand out from the President-Elect's plan:

- *"Ensure that rural Americans have access to a modern communications infrastructure. (…) modernize an FCC program that supports rural phone service so that it **promotes affordable broadband coverage across rural America** as well"* [1]
- *"Make an up-front investment **of $50 Billion in electronic health** information technology systems to reduce errors, and save lives and money"* [2]

Interviews and Speeches, past policies

President-elect Obama has placed a great deal of emphasis on expanding broadband access. Transforming the **Universal Service Fund** (USF) from a program that supports access to telephony to one that supports broadband access will probably affect the work of the Minnesota Ultra High-Speed Broadband Taskforce

Obama's campaign platform supported the concept of "**network neutrality**," placing him in the mainstream of Democratic thinking on the issue.

To the extent that there is any departure from his campaign promises as he seeks to implement his agenda on Capitol Hill, it may be felt most in terms of scaling back the cost of his initiatives. Even though he stresses the potential efficiencies that technology investments can yield, it will be difficult for Congress to budget more than $200 billion for energy and health care technology investments alone in this current budget environment. [3]

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[1] "BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE, Obama and Biden's Plan for America", p.47

[2] "BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE, Obama and Biden's Plan for America", p.25

[3] BKSH & Associates Election Memo 2008, p.19

Appointments[4]

One area where President-elect Obama could have a lasting impact on how technology and government interact is in his call to create a **Chief Technology Officer** for the Federal Government.

Analysts expect a strong emphasis by the new Administration on the potential for technology in both changing the way that government and citizens interact, as well as the role of technology in modernizing the American economy.

Obama's transition team, announced this week, includes executives from some of the top technology companies in the U.S. Sonal Shah, head of global development initiatives at Google.org has been named to the transition team's advisory board, along with Donald Gips, group vice president at Internet specialist Level 3 Communications. Probably the biggest name from the technology and telecommunications sector in the transition team is Julius Genachowski, co-founder of technology investment firm LaunchBox Digital and a former chief counsel to ex-FCC chairman Reed Hundt.

Media reports have already suggested Google CEO (and vocal Obama supporter) Eric Schmidt, Internet guru Vint Cerf and onetime FCC Chairman Reed Hundt as possible candidates for the CTO role.[5]

Summary

Regardless of how appointments and campaign promises play out in the new administration, the Obama presidency represents the arrival of a new generation to power. One that is more comfortable with technology and the internet, and that has achieved political success by mastering not only the newest technologies, but also the broader social implications of the internet.

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[4] http://news.cnet.com/8301-13578_3-10082672-38.html?tag=mncol;txt

[5] http://www.forbes.com/technology/2008/11/11/first-cto-obama-tech-cio-cx_ec_1111firstcto.html?feed=rss_technology