

Testimony of

The Honorable Maria Cantwell

March 14, 2002

I want to thank the Chairman for calling this hearing. The question of digital rights management is at the core of digital convergence and the process of developing standards will test every industry's ability to come together to fully benefit from the technologies that are so changing and improving products and services, and ultimately our culture and economy.

We are in a transition, moving from an analog to digital world. Everyone is recalibrating - and it is a challenge.

We in Congress have a responsibility to make sure that the appropriate balance is maintained - that owners and users of intellectual property have the appropriate rules to live by. The best way to maintain the balance is through consensus, not government mandates.

For several years, the Content Protection Technical Working Group has been working to develop consensus-based copyright protections that balance the needs of content creators, equipment designers and consumers. I want to urge continued progress, not conflict; compromise, not mandates.

I want to see industries continue to work together, to resolve the complex technical issues as rapidly as possible so we can move the ball forward on all the new services that are the promise of the Internet. This is not something the government can decide.

Let me make a very important comment: piracy is abhorrent to me, and I am truly disturbed by the scale of music piracy.

But technology serves many legitimate uses. As copy protections for movies and music are developed, these other uses must also be given consideration.

As content protection standards are developed, we must assure that they facilitate, rather than interfere with the innovation; and facilitate, rather than interfere with the consumer's ability to fully enjoy new products and services.

The question to me is not whether there should be copy protection, there must be.

The real question is how protection standards should come about; whether technology standards should develop in the marketplace or whether the government should make the decision. The government should not be picking technology winners and losers.

I look forward to hearing today from our witnesses on the progress the industries have made toward delivering the content and services the Internet promises to consumers.