

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN McCAIN  
CHAIRMAN, SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION  
COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON  
INTERNATIONAL SATELLITE REFORM  
MARCH 25, 1999

Good Afternoon. I would like to thank all of our witnesses for appearing today, and I commend Chairman Burns for convening this subcommittee hearing on the important issue of international satellite reform.

Over thirty-five years ago, the Communications Satellite Act of 1962 helped create a framework for providing a commercial satellite system to serve the nations of the world. Through this Act, the United States joined with other countries to form INTELSAT, an intergovernmental organization that provided basic telecommunications services. The success of INTELSAT has helped foster advances in satellite technology.

However, in the 37 years since we enacted the Satellite Act, the landscape has, as would be expected, due to the inevitable march of advancing technology -- changed. Commercial satellite systems now offer telecommunications services to many countries. Soon, in the not too distant future, these commercial satellite systems will be providing broadband and other advanced telecommunications services around the globe. INTELSAT management itself has recognized that these changes warrant privatization in order for INTELSAT to compete in this growing global market.

It is time to adopt our regulatory framework to conform to this new world. In recognition of that fact, I am pleased to cosponsor Senator Burns' ORBIT Bill. I strongly believe that Congress must pass fair and effective satellite reform legislation this session. And I commit to my colleagues that I will make it a priority to do so.

Once again, I commend Senator Burns on his leadership in this complex area. The Burns' Bill provides a principled basis for examining this complex and important issue. I recognize that there are different perspectives and viewpoints on international satellite reform, and we will need to work out those differences. I personally have some concerns, but I am confident we will work all these issues out. Again, I thank Senator Burns and I look forward to hearing our witnesses' views.