

Statement of Support for *Coalition for Independent Technology Research v. Rubio*

Voted in the affirmative by the Executive Board on 2 June 2026

From the Association of Internet Researchers

The Association of Internet Researchers (AOIR), a global scholarly and educational organization representing researchers who study the social aspects of the Internet, expresses concern over U.S. policies that target noncitizens who work and conduct research in online safety and related fields [1,2,3]. We also express support for [the legal challenge to these actions](#) [4] brought by the Coalition for Independent Technology Research (CITR), the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, and Protect Democracy in *Coalition for Independent Technology Research v. Rubio*.

As an academic association dedicated to the advancement of the field of Internet studies, AOIR exists to encourage socially responsible internet research that serves the common good. AOIR supports the statute of the International Council for Science [4] in that the free and responsible practice of research is fundamental to the advancement of knowledge, innovation, and human and environmental well-being. Such practice, in all its aspects, requires freedom of movement, association, expression and communication for researchers.

In May 2025, the U.S. State Department announced a policy of excluding and deporting noncitizens whose research aims to combat misinformation and disinformation, promote fact-checking and responsible content moderation, trust, safety, and compliance procedures for digital systems [1,2,3]. The government claims that this policy targets those who are “complicit in censorship.” But the proposed policy, in fact, threatens to censor constitutionally-protected speech of people whose work informs public debate and benefits consumers, businesses, and democratic institutions alike.

The State Department's censorship policy further threatens internet research in concrete ways:

It disrupts international scholarly collaboration. Technology research is inherently global because the Internet is a system that operates across borders. A policy that makes entry to the United States contingent on the perceived conclusions of one's research fundamentally undermines the collaborative fabric essential to the study of the social, cultural, political, economic, and aesthetic aspects of the Internet.

It introduces a chilling effect with no clear boundaries. The policy provides no transparent criteria for who qualifies as “complicit in censorship.” This vagueness radiates outward through

the research community, causing scholars to second-guess whether studying or speaking about the societal effects of technology platforms will attract government retaliation. When researchers self-censor, the public loses access to the independent evidence it needs to make informed decisions about the technologies of daily life.

We are dismayed to read [the stories of named and unnamed students, faculty, and independent scholars](#) [4] who have been affected by this policy through reduced public expression, reductions in their capacity to connect with others, and missed opportunities to do public-interest research. We feel the weight of the missing books, articles, and conversations that might otherwise see the light of day and express support for all who have faced distress and disruption from this policy.

We support the legal challenge in *CITR v. Rubio* because we believe that the policy is incompatible with the principles of AoIR and our shared commitment to the freedom of movement, association, expression, and communication fundamental to sustaining productive inquiry and future internet scholarship.

AOIR Member Nominators (Institutional affiliations are for identification purposes only)

Dr. J. Nathan Matias, Cornell University Department of Communication

Dr. Nathan Schneider, Department of Media Studies, University of Colorado Boulder

Dr. Adrienne Massanari, School of Communication, American University

Dr. David Nemer, Department of Media Studies, University of Virginia

Dr. Alice E. Marwick, Data & Society Research Institute

Dr. Mary L. Gray, Microsoft Research and the Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering, Indiana University

Endnotes

- [1] Marco Rubio. 2025. Announcement of Actions to Combat the Global Censorship-Industrial Complex. U.S. Department of State. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/12/announcement-of-actions-to-combat-the-global-censorship-industrial-complex>
- [2] Humeysa Panuck. 2025. Exclusive: Trump administration orders enhanced vetting for applicants of H-1B visa. Reuters. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-administration-orders-enhanced-vetting-applicants-h-1b-visa-2025-12-04/>
- [3] Marco Rubio. 2025. Announcement of a Visa Restriction Policy Targeting Foreign Nationals Who Censor Americans. U.S. Department of State. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/announcement-of-a-visa-restriction-policy-targeting-foreign-nationals-who-censor-americans/>
- [3] International Council for Science Statutes and Rules of Procedure. Retrieved from https://www.council.science/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/ISC_Statutes_RulesProcedure_30jan2025_EN.pdf
- [4] Knight First Amendment Institute. 2026. Technology Researchers Challenge Trump Policy Threatening Deportation for Work on Social Media Platforms and Online Harms. Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University. Retrieved from <https://knightcolumbia.org/content/technology-researchers-challenge-trump-policy-threatening-deportation-for-work-on-social-media-platforms-and-online-harms>