

Boucher calls for dot-com investigation

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Rep. Rick Boucher, D-Va., is asking for a House committee to launch a formal investigation into operation of the dot-com domain.

In a letter Thursday Boucher wrote to the members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee calling for an investigation into the proposed settlement between VeriSign and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers.

Boucher is co-chair for the House Internet Caucus.

"I have deep concerns about this agreement, which would effectively permanently extend VeriSign's contract as operator of the dot-com TLD (top level domain), which accounts for about 75 percent of all domain name registrations in the United States," wrote Boucher.

Last month ICANN approved a proposal allowing VeriSign to retain its management over the dot-com top-level domain registry until 2012.

The decisions still has to be approved by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Under the settlement, VeriSign would also pay a one-time \$625,000 fee to ICANN or "meeting the costs associated with establishing structures to implement the provisions of this agreement."

But ICANN also expects to have VeriSign pay a much higher registry-level fee as much as \$6 million for operating in the first year and \$12

million in 2009.

Boucher argues that current settlement removes "checks and balances" in contract renewal by specifically removing competitive bidding.

"Before the Commerce Department approves a settlement which would grant VeriSign a virtual perpetual monopoly over administration of the dot-com TLD," wrote Boucher, "the members of this Committee should have the opportunity to examine the global implications of the agreement for the future of the domain name registration system and the Internet."

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