

of preventing someone from using them and potentially discredit a brand's name.

"I view it as little more than a predatory shakedown scheme," the chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee said in a letter addressed to the head of ICANN's board of directors.

Any benefit from such a new generic Top Level Domain (gTLD) would be far outweighed by its potential to be used to "defame" individuals, non-profit organizations and businesses, Rockefeller said.

California-based ICANN says the huge expansion of the Internet—with some two billion users around the world, half of them in Asia—means new names are essential to provide enough addresses to meet demand.

ICANN has begun to expand online neighborhoods since January with the arrivals of domains like ".guru," ".bike"—and even ".singles."

Opening the Internet to domain names that go far beyond .com, .net, .gov, and .edu has been heralded by the non-profit group as the biggest change to the Web since it was created.



Senator Jay Rockefeller speaks during the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC on March 1, 2012

Rockefeller identified three companies vying for ICANN's blessing to run the .sucks domain with the expressed reasoning that such addresses would inspire debate and benefit consumers.

But Rockefeller contended that the apparent business model aimed to get people, groups or companies to pay recurring fees to avoid having ".sucks" appended to their names in website addresses.

One contender for running the domain is offering pre-registration of website names for \$2,500, with a warning that the price will leap 10-fold when it is close to opening, according to the senator.

ICANN did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

More than 100 new gTLDs have cleared hurdles to reach registries.

"This is a historic milestone for ICANN's new gTLD program and the Internet as a whole," vice president of gTLD operations Christine Willett said in January.

"The year ahead will be defined by new opportunities in a vastly expanding online landscape."

The expansion of domain addresses is not just limited to the Roman script.

Online neighborhoods with addresses ending in the Chinese word for "game;" the Arabic words for "web" or "network," or the Cyrillic word for "online" were cleared last year and more are to follow suit.

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Citation: US senator attacks '.sucks' web address plans (Update) (2014, March 12) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-03-senator-online-neighborhood.html>

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