

Randall L. Stephenson, AT&T
Ronan Dunne, Verizon Wireless
John Legere, T-Mobile
Marcelo Claure, Sprint
Kenneth R. Meyers, U.S. Cellular

December 21, 2016

Re: Ensure internet connectivity for events and demonstrations during weekend of Presidential Inauguration

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are writing to request that your company ensures mobile internet connectivity during expected events and demonstrations in Washington, DC on the weekend of January 20, 2017. The weekend will include the United States Presidential Inauguration, and also several demonstrations such as the Women's March on Washington. We specifically call on you to provide adequate Cell-on-Wheels (COW) support, or other equivalent technology and infrastructure, in order to allow participants to maintain secure and open uptime online.

The internet is an essential enabler of human rights in the 21st century, and mobile connectivity is particularly important for people to exercise their rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. Robust wireless access to networks, applications, and services enables people to communicate with their loved ones, reach emergency services, and document rights abuses if they occur.

It is common for mobile networks to be overwhelmed by network congestion during public assemblies. People drop calls or are unable to connect to the internet, preventing them from sharing updates with family and friends. In extreme circumstances, citizens and journalists have been prevented from recording rights abuses by government authorities and private actors who intentionally disrupt access.

Given the expected volume of the demonstrations -- with more than 151,000 people currently registered to attend the Women's March on Washington alone -- there will be a high demand for bandwidth throughout the weekend. Journalists will rely on the internet to report their stories and users will upload citizen video to document the demonstrations.

According to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, companies have a duty to respect human rights, and to take steps to mitigate and remedy violations as they occur. This duty extends beyond simply following the law, and at times can require active pushback against orders that conflict with your human rights responsibilities. We urge you to be prepared for a range of threats to the rights of your users, and to ensure that your company provides adequate network coverage throughout the duration of the demonstrations. Proactive preparation will help

you enable access to rights, as well as enhance your reputation among users, over this important weekend.

We were encouraged by AT&T's December 19 announcement that it will provide seven Super Cell-on-Wheels towers on the National Mall during the Presidential Inauguration itself, and we recommend that your company goes further to provide similarly robust access throughout the weekend.

We respectfully request a reply to this letter by **Thursday, January 5, 2017.**

Signed,
Access Now
WITNESS



Contacts

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Access Now (accessnow.org) defends and extends the digital rights of users at risk around the world. By combining innovative policy, global advocacy, and direct technical support, we fight for open and secure communications for all.

WITNESS (witness.org) is an international organization that trains and supports people using video in their fight for human rights.