

# STATE OF THE NET



Internet  
Education  
Foundation

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## 02 Keynote with Beth Williams

State of the Net – Feb 11 2025

### Keynote Speaker: Hon. Beth Williams

- **Introduction by Steve DelBianco:** He introduced Beth Williams and welcomed her to the State of the Net 2025 event.
- **Opening Remarks by Beth Williams:**
  - Expressed gratitude for the invitation.
  - Introduced the **Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board (PCLOB)** and its mission to balance counterterrorism efforts with privacy and civil liberties.
  - Mentioned that despite being **sub-quorum**, the PCLOB is still active and has adopted a **new policy** to ensure work continues.

### Key Points from Beth Williams' Speech

1. **PCLOB's Sub-Quorum Policy:**
  - The **new policy (adopted in October)** allows operations to continue even with only one member.
  - Enables staff to conduct investigations, issue reports, and provide recommendations.
  - Allows interaction with executive agencies, Congress, and other stakeholders.
2. **Current and Future Projects:**

- **EO 14086 & U.S.-EU Data Privacy Framework:**
  - PCLOB reviewed Intelligence Agencies' Attorney General Guidelines.
  - Participated in the first U.S.-EU review of the framework.
  - Ongoing analysis of policy implementation and redress mechanisms.
- **Domestic Terrorism & Free Speech:**
  - Investigating how counter-disinformation efforts affect **free speech**.
  - Examining whether these efforts **disproportionately impact specific groups**.
  - Expressed concern over **government pressure on social media companies**.
- **Facial Recognition in Aviation Security:**
  - Evaluating the benefits vs. civil liberties risks of facial recognition in airports.
- **FISA Section 702 Reforms:**
  - Discussed past PCLOB reports on **FBI abuses** of FISA.
  - Advocated **new safeguards** to prevent misuse.
  - Anticipating reauthorization in **spring 2025**.
- **Potential Future Investigations:**
  - Examining **government influence over banks ("debanking")** in counterterrorism cases.
  - Investigating **government access to financial data**, including the **SEC's Consolidated Audit Trail**.
- 3. **Commitment to Independent Oversight:**
  - Emphasized **rigorous, evidence-based oversight**.
  - Rejected **partisan influence**, citing historical examples of single-member leadership.
  - Asserted that PCLOB remains **"open for business"** despite the lack of a quorum.

## Q&A Session

1. **Steve DelBianco:** Asked about **preventing government pressure ("jawboning")** on content platforms.
  - Williams responded that **PCLOB can help provide transparency** and recommend guardrails to prevent abuse.
  - Noted that **Congress is already considering legislation** on this issue.
2. **Jake Laperruque (Center for Democracy & Technology):** Asked if **PCLOB's independence is compromised by the president's ability to fire members at will**.
  - Williams avoided direct criticism of the administration.
  - Stated that **PCLOB's statute does not provide for-cause protections**.
  - Reiterated focus on ensuring the board continues functioning.

## Closing Remarks

- Williams reaffirmed **PCLOB's commitment** to **privacy, civil liberties, and intelligence oversight**.
  - Encouraged continued engagement and transparency.
  - Concluded with **a call to move forward "full steam ahead"**.
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