

**From:** [Emily Bremer](#)  
**To:** [Scott Cooper](#)  
**Subject:** FW: [OMBlog]: Updating Guidance on Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards to Promote Smarter Regulation, Collaboration, and Technological Innovation  
**Date:** Friday, February 14, 2014 6:23:00 PM

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FYI

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**From:** Weiss, Jeff [mailto:JWeiss@doc.gov]  
**Sent:** Friday, February 14, 2014 6:19 PM  
**To:** Weiss, Jeff  
**Subject:** [OMBlog]: Updating Guidance on Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards to Promote Smarter Regulation, Collaboration, and Technological Innovation

In case you hadn't seen...

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/02/14/updating-guidance-use-voluntary-consensus-standards-promote-smarter-regulation-col-0>

Updating Guidance on Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards to Promote Smarter Regulation, Collaboration, and Technological Innovation

Posted by Howard Shelanski, Miriam Sapiro, and Patrick Gallagher on February 14, 2014 at 05:59 PM EST

The computer, tablet, or smartphone you are using to read this blog is comprised of parts and components that were developed, manufactured, and assembled in different locations around the United States and the globe, yet was carefully designed to ensure that your device is safe and interoperable with other devices. We don't spend much time thinking or worrying about how our electronics work or if they are safe, due largely to the ingenuity of the companies that make these products and their willingness to collaborate with each other to develop technologies that are safe, innovative, and interoperable. While these companies do an excellent job in designing our products, it is important to remember that governments also play a critical role in ensuring the products that impact our daily lives are safe, effective, and protective of the environment.

Since the enactment of the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act in 1995, U.S. Federal regulatory agencies have been guided by the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Circular A-119, "Federal Participation in the Development and Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards and in Conformity Assessment Activities." In 1998, OMB issued a revised version of Circular A-119, which has been guiding agencies on the use of voluntary consensus standards in regulation and on conformity assessment ever since.

Over the intervening years since those revisions, the scope of economic activity and technology innovation has become increasingly global, and its complexity requires governments to collaborate more closely with the private sector, other stakeholders, and each other. Many of the regulations that U.S. agencies issue every year rely on the work of standards developers and providers of conformity assessment services in the private sector. Many of these regulations impact companies, workers, and consumers both inside and outside the United States. As the worlds of regulation, standards, and trade increasingly intersect, and domestic and international interests increasingly overlap, close collaboration

within the U.S. government on these issues has become critical, as has a more comprehensive approach.

In light of these significant changes that have taken place since 1998, OMB has joined together with the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to develop a [comprehensive proposal to update Circular A-119](#). This forward-looking proposal includes important and timely updates to U.S. policies on how standards and conformity assessment support regulation, procurement, international regulatory cooperation, and other government functions. The proposed changes will help:

- strengthen implementation of international trade rules, helping prevent the creation of trade barriers, and avoiding unnecessary regulatory differences with key trading partners;
- support a flexible, transparent, and innovative U.S. standards system for the 21st Century that promotes economic growth, competitiveness, and job creation;
- reduce regulatory complexity, duplication and costs on companies, workers, consumers and the U.S. Government itself, as well as cumulative burdens on the economy, through promoting retrospective review of existing regulations and increased reliance on private sector solutions, where appropriate; and
- ensure that U.S. regulations reflect state of the art technical solutions for purposes of interoperability, as well as to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the American public and our environment.

This effort represents an important part of our ongoing work to strengthen our regulatory practices to help create jobs, grow the economy, and expand opportunity for the American people. We invite you to review our proposal and submit your comments, which you may do online [here](#). OMB, USTR, and NIST will also be hosting a workshop this spring to obtain additional public input on the proposed changes.

*Howard Shelanski is the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs of the Office of Management and Budget*

*Miriam Sapiro is the Deputy United States Trade Representative*

*Patrick Gallagher is the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology at the Department of Commerce*