

Accountable.US Case Study: The Nomination Of Gigi Sohn

SUMMARY: The nomination of former FCC aid and Georgetown Law Fellow Gigi Sohn to the position of FCC commissioner was history making, as Sohn would be the first openly LGBTQ individual to serve as a commissioner. Conservative opposition to President Biden's nominees has resulted in extended nomination timelines, and Sohn's nomination process has managed to carry on for over five times longer than the typical timeline for other Biden-appointed FCC nominees. Sohn's nomination was forced to be withdrawn and resubmitted due to obstruction in Congress, forcing her to attend two separate committee hearings where she faced significant Republican opposition. As of July 2022, her nomination remains pending before the Senate.

During Sohn's previous stint at the FCC she helped advocate for net neutrality rules, which were backed by a large grassroots campaign of internet advocates. Sohn herself is a longtime advocate for an open internet, having founded a policy group, Public Knowledge, in the early 2000s. Her reputation made her a target for the broadband and cable industry, as they feared her confirmation would cut into their profits and stock price.

The main line of attacks levied against Sohn originated from the media empire of Rupert Murdoch and from broadband trade associations. The Wall Street Journal editorial board, The New York Post's opinion page, and Fox News attacked Sohn for previous statements and painted her as a unqualified partisan who seeks to censor conservative speech. Conservative outlets also attacked her for her support of broadband regulation and net neutrality. Her reputation as a partisan was core to the main line of attack levied at Sohn by Republican Senators during her first confirmation hearing.

Broadband and cable industry association group The National Association of Broadcasters criticized Sohn for her involvement with a nonprofit streaming service Locast that they viewed as copyright infringement. The broadband industry and conservative media also pressured Sohn to pledge she would recuse herself on some matters that they believed would be a conflict due to her work at a nonprofit she founded called Public Knowledge. These calls for recusal dominated Sohn's second confirmation hearing.

Another notable group with connections to industry agitating against Sohn was the 501(c)(4) group One Country. Founded by two former Democratic Senators, Joe Donnelly and Heidi Heitkamp, the group launched an ad campaign targeting the states of Sens. Manchin and Sinema arguing Sohn opposes rural broadband due to her support for industry regulation. One Country is tied to the telecom and broadband industry via a close relationship with lobbying firm Forbes Tate, which has represented numerous industry groups and companies.

Until Sohn is confirmed, the FCC sits in gridlock with 2 Democratic nominees and 2 Republican nominees, preventing the board from voting on crucial policy decisions. In Sohn's own words: "I think there are certain very large companies that would like the FCC continue to be deadlocked. It's no secret."

NOMINATION TIMELINE

Sohn's Nomination Process Has Been Drawn Out Significantly Longer Than The Average Nomination Time For A Biden FCC Nominee And Her Nomination Is Still Pending

*	Date Of Nomination	Hearing Date	Floor Vote OR Withdrawal Date	Days From Nomination To Hearing	Days From Hearing To Confirmation OR Withdrawal	Days From Nomination To Confirmation OR Withdrawal OR Last Action
Gigi Sohn (First Nomination)	10/28/21	12/2/21	Withdrawn: 1/3/22	35	32	67
Gigi Sohn (Second Nomination)	1/4/22	2/9/22		36		102
Sohn (Average and Aggregate)				35.5		228
Jessica Rosenworcel (Other Biden FCC Nominee)	10/28/21	11/17/21	Confirmed: 12/7/21	20	20	40
John Chase Johnson (Other Biden FCC Nominee)	1/3/21		Withdrawn: 2/4/21	N/A	32	32
FCC Average (Includes Both Sohn Nominations)				30.33333333	26	46.33333333
DIFFERENCE				Received a hearing 5 days later than average for FCC nominees		Sohn's nomination remained pending for at least 181 days longer than average for FEC nominees

*Note: The table above contains a limited data set because there are a limited number of individuals nominated to positions at the FEC

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INITIAL MEDIA REACTION

Initial Media Coverage Of Sohn Described Her Nomination As Historic And Noted Her Involvement In Obama-Era Net Neutrality Policy

Penn Law: Sohn Would Be The First LGBTQ Commissioner In FCC History. “According to a White House press release, President Joe Biden has nominated Gigi Sohn L’86 to serve as a Commissioner on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Pending Senate confirmation, Sohn will become the third Democrat Commissioner on the current FCC and the first openly LGBTQ+ Commissioner in FCC history.” [Penn Law, [10/26/21](#)]

NPR: Sohn Is Expected To Usher Return In A To Obama Era Net Neutrality Rules. “She and Sohn are expected to push for a return of Obama-era net neutrality rules, which would prohibit internet providers from slowing internet speeds or blocking content. Sohn is currently a distinguished fellow at the Georgetown Law Institute for Technology Law & Policy and a Benton senior fellow and public advocate.” [NPR, [10/26/21](#)]

Prior To Joining The FCC As An Aid, Sohn Founded Tech Policy Group Public Knowledge And Advocated For Net Neutrality. “Before her prior stint at the FCC, Sohn worked extensively advocating for net neutrality. She founded the tech policy group Public Knowledge and ran it for more than a decade, and the group was an early supporter of the issue. In addition, she’d spent time at the Ford Foundation as a project specialist in the Media, Arts and Culture unit. Although Sohn left in 2001, the foundation said in 2015 that it had spent “around \$4 million a year over the past 10 years” supporting the issue.” [Protocol, [10/26/21](#)]

Penn Law: Sohn Will Be A Qualified Advocate For An Open And Accessible Internet. “Sohn’s impressive career advocating for equal and democratic access to the internet has spanned both the governmental and non-governmental sectors. Most recently, Sohn has held positions as a Distinguished Fellow at Georgetown Law Institute for Technology Law & Policy and a Senior Fellow and Public Advocate at the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society. From 2013-2016, Sohn served as Counselor to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler, where she advised and represented him on a wide range of telecommunications and media issues. As one of the country’s most prominent advocates for open and affordable internet access, Sohn’s influence in the field cannot be overstated. Currently, Sohn sits on the Board of Directors for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a nonprofit advocate for digital privacy, and in 2001, Sohn co-founded Public Knowledge, a leading policy advocacy organization dedicated to maintaining the internet as an open, public space.” [Penn Law, [10/26/21](#)]

Protocol: Sohn Is A Previous Top FCC Aid And Brings Heaps Of Experience As An Architect Of Net Neutrality Rules. “Sohn previously served as a top aide to Obama-era FCC chair Tom Wheeler, who took her

on despite her criticism of the commission's prior leadership for failing to institute net neutrality. In that role, she was an architect of the commission's 2015 net neutrality order, which banned internet service providers from blocking web content, slowing it down or demanding pay for prioritizing it. Despite playing out in the legalistic context of federal agency rule-making, the FCC's actions at the time were the culmination of a years-long campaign that spilled over into one of the first major grassroots tech policy movements and even took on a certain pop culture appeal. (Remember the John Oliver segment?)" [Protocol, [10/26/21](#)]

- **NPR: Sohn Is A Distinguished Fellow At Georgetown Law.** "She and Sohn are expected to push for a return of Obama-era net neutrality rules, which would prohibit internet providers from slowing internet speeds or blocking content. Sohn is currently a distinguished fellow at the Georgetown Law Institute for Technology Law & Policy and a Benton senior fellow and public advocate." [NPR, [10/26/21](#)]

Protocol: Sohn Has Extensive Experience Combatting Extremism And Promoting Diversity On The Internet. "Sohn worked with or oversaw some of the best-known and earliest tech policy figures. Law professor and open-internet advocate Lawrence Lessig served on the group's board during Sohn's tenure. Mike Godwin, who coined an eponymous "law" about Nazi comparisons on the internet and successfully helped litigate against the non-Section 230 provisions of the Communications Decency Act, served as Public Knowledge's legal director for a time. Sohn's affiliations go broader, though. Before Public Knowledge and the Ford Foundation, she spent more than a decade at the top ranks of the now-defunct Media Access Project, the consumer group that worked on issues such as media diversity and ownership rules. She's also on the board of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, one of the oldest tech policy groups, which has spent years pushing for net neutrality, Section 230 protections, free speech online, strong encryption and privacy" [Protocol, [10/26/21](#)]

The Congressional Equality Caucus Celebrated Sohn's Nomination As The Potential First LGBTQ FCC Commissioner. "The Equality Caucus is thrilled to see the announcement of the President's intent to nominate Gigi Sohn as a Commissioner on the Federal Communications Commission and we call on the Senate to confirm her as soon as possible," said Equality Caucus Chair David Cicilline (RI-01). "Gigi has been a tireless advocate for American consumers. She has a deep knowledge of competition, the information technology landscape, and a commitment to ensuring fair and equal access to communications technology. We are proud to note that if she is confirmed, Gigi will be the first openly LGBTQ Commissioner of the FCC" [Congressional LGBTQ Caucus, [10/26/21](#)]

Bay Area Reporter: Sohn Is Very Experienced And Would Protect Internet Access To Ensure Its's Private, Open, And Affordable. "For over 30 years, the release noted, Sohn has worked to defend and preserve the fundamental competition and innovation policies that have made broadband Internet access more ubiquitous, competitive, affordable, open, and protective of user privacy. If Sohn is confirmed by the U.S. Senate, she would be the first openly LGBTQ FCC commissioner. She is well qualified for the post, and is one of the nation's leading public advocates for open, affordable, and democratic communications networks, according to a White House news release. [...] According to NPR, Rosenworcel and Sohn are expected to push for returning to Obama-era net neutrality rules, which would prohibit internet providers from slowing internet speeds or blocking content. The agency also has the responsibility to set rules for everything from 5G technology to how much prisoners can be charged for phone calls." [Bay Area Reporter, [10/27/21](#)]

Ars Technica: Sohn's Nomination Was Called Part Of A "Dream Team" Of Nominees By Consumer Protection Advocates. "This is a dream team for anyone who cares about the future of the Internet and the media. Nominating Rosenworcel, Sohn, and Davidson would demonstrate the Biden administration's commitment to making media and tech policy that will actually serve people." [Free Press, [10/26/21](#)]

Metro Weekly: Sohn's Confirmation Would Be A Victory For LGBTQ Groups. "A potential Sohn nomination was pushed heavily by LGBTQ Victory Institute's Presidential Appointments Initiative, which recommends and advocates for qualified LGBTQ people to be appointed to key roles within government." [Metro Weekly, [10/27/21](#)]

Fringe Conservative Media Organizations Backed Sohn Over Her Support For Smaller Cable Networks And Industry Analysts Suggested She Would Be Bad For Cable Companies

Newsmax And OAN Supported Sohn's Nomination Because Of Her Support Of Smaller Cable Networks And Her Opposition To Consolidation. "Despite the acrimony she faces in the Senate, Sohn is also known for maintaining deep friendships across the aisle from her years in Washington, and unlikely help arrived in recent days: The heads of two conservative news networks, Newsmax and One America News Network, have come out in favor of Sohn. Her opposition to widespread media consolidation, including the ultimately failed Sinclair-Tribune deal, has put her on the same side as the small programmers." [Protocol, [12/01/21](#)]

Light Reading: Media Analyst Peter Supino Said Sohn's Policy Agenda Would Harm Cable Company Stock Prices. "A counselor to former FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler during the Obama administration from 2013-2016, in addition to leading the consumer advocacy group Public Knowledge, Sohn is known to both the federal agency and many on Capitol Hill, a fact that may have helped and hurt her so far. [...] That senatorial opposition may have come via whispers from their friends in the cable lobby. Indeed, the mere consideration of Sohn for Chair was one reason for Bernstein media analyst Peter Supino to downgrade his rating on Charter Communications stock in July: "As chairwoman, we think Sohn would probably pursue a form of broadband price regulation," Supino wrote. "Were Sohn appointed, we would expect cable stocks to tumble. In such a scenario, we would expect Charter to decline more than Comcast given its much higher mix of EBITDA from internet service provision." [LightReading, [10/29/21](#)]

RIGHT-WING ATTACKS ON SOHN

Rupert Murdoch-Owned Media Outlets Opposed Sohn, Claiming Her Confirmation Would Spell The End Of Conservative Media's Press Freedom

The Wall Street Journal Described Sohn As A Left-Wing Partisan Actor, Citing Previous Tweets, Her Criticism Of Sinclair Broadcasting, And Her Experience Advising The Obama-Era FCC

Wall Street Journal Editorial Board: Sohn Founded "Leftwing" Group Public Knowledge And Supported Net Neutrality As An Obama Era FCC Advisor. "Ms. Sohn founded the leftwing group Public Knowledge that has long sought more government control of the internet and media. She was a counselor to Obama FCC Chair Tom Wheeler and was a driving force behind the "net neutrality" regulation that classified broadband providers as common carriers under Title II of the Communications Act of 1934." [Editorial, WSJ, [11/08/21](#)]

Wall Street Journal Editorial Board: Sohn May Want To Censor Conservative Speech Online And She Previously Called Fox News "State-Sponsored Propaganda" On Twitter. "She's also hinted at deploying the agency's regulatory power to censor conservative media and revive a version of its mooted fairness doctrine. "For all my concerns about #Facebook, I believe that Fox News has had the most negative impact on our democracy," she tweeted in October 2020. "It's state-sponsored propaganda, with few if any opposing viewpoints." [Editorial, WSJ, [11/08/21](#)]

Wall Street Journal Editorial Board: Sohn Likely Wants To Regulate Broadband Providers "Like Electricity Prices." "'I'm not advocating for just reinstating the old rules," Ms. Sohn told the media site CNET last year. "We need to push for FCC authority to adopt policy to handle issues like zero-rating and data caps." Progressives want the government to regulate broadband rates like electricity prices, and Ms. Sohn's musings suggest she'd be on board." [WSJ, [11/08/21](#)]

Wall Street Journal Editorial Board: Sohn Celebrated A Failed Merger Between Sinclair Broadcasting And Tribune Broadcasting And Called For An Investigation Into Sinclair. “Ms. Sohn seems to believe that the state is endorsing conservative speech by allowing cable companies to carry it. She also has suggested using the FCC’s power over broadcast licenses to censor conservative outlets. After Tribune Broadcasting abandoned its merger with the conservative-leaning Sinclair Broadcast Group in 2018, she declared “Today is a good day for every American who believes that diversity of voices in the media is better for our democracy” and urged the FCC to “look at whether Sinclair is qualified to be a broadcast licensee at all.” [WSJ, [11/08/21](#)]

Wall Street Journal Editorial Board: Sohn’s “Strident Partisanship Should Disqualify Her.” “Ms. Sohn’s strident partisanship should disqualify her from serving as an officer of an independent agency with so much power to control the public airwaves. There’s also a risk that the President could designate her as Chair after she’s confirmed, as he did with the radical Lina Khan on the Federal Trade Commission.” [WSJ, [11/08/21](#)]

Wall Street Journal Editorial Board: Sohn Has An Extensive History Of Partisan Online Comments, Including Anti-Trump Comments. “Among Mr. Biden’s inner circle, Ms. Sohn’s political tweets no doubt earn nods of approval. “I have Republican Friends—They’re Not All Insane;” “if g-d forbid Trump wins, the only thing protecting our Republic is the Ds taking over the Senate;” “I don’t give a rat if you want to still be a Republican. But if you think @realDonaldTrump is destroying the Constitution and this country, you must vote for @JoeBiden, full stop.” But there is a difference between dime-a-dozen West Wing political appointees and the long-lasting power and influence of an FCC commissioner.” [WSJ, [11/30/21](#)]

The New York Post Published An Op-Ed Attacking Sohn For Her Role In A Lawsuit Involving A Streaming Television Service Called Locast

January 29, 2022: The New York Post Published An Op-Ed Where The Writer Accused Sohn Of Misrepresenting Her Role In A Locast Settlement. “Parties, including Sohn, signed the paperwork a day after she was nominated by Biden to the FCC, which means it appears that the broadcasters and Locast were negotiating the seemingly light terms knowing full well she was on her way possibly becoming their regulator. The backstory on all of this could derail Sohn’s nomination as it makes it way to a vote in the Commerce Committee this Wednesday, telecom insiders tell me. Roger Wicker, the ranking Republican on the committee, questioned Sohn during her Dec. 1 hearing. He then asked her in writing how Locast came up with the full \$32 million payment to the broadcasters — a seemingly big chunk of change for an outfit billed as a not-for-profit.” [Op-Ed, New York Post, [1/29/22](#)]

Fox News Launched Attacks Against Sohn That Centered On Her Anti-Brett Kavanaugh Tweets And Her Previous Donations To Democratic Presidential Candidates

Fox News Criticized Sohn For Referring To Brett Kavanaugh As An “Angry White Man” During His Confirmation Hearings. “Sohn has called on the FCC to “look at whether” Sinclair Broadcast, which is known as a conservative-leaning company, “is qualified to be a broadcast licensee at all.” She ridiculed Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh as an “angry white man” during his confirmation hearings.” [Fox News, [11/11/21](#)]

Fox News Claimed Sohn Was Too Partisan To Lead To FCC Because She Had Donated To Democratic Candidates Including Barack Obama And Hillary Clinton. “She has also donated roughly \$30,000 to Democrats over the last two decades, including \$6,675 to Obama for America and Obama Victory Fund, according to Federal Election Commission (FEC) records. She also donated almost \$5,000 to President Biden’s 2020 campaign and \$1,861 to Hillary Clinton’s failed 2016 presidential campaign.” [Fox News, [11/11/21](#)]

Cable And Broadband Industry Groups Mounted An Offensive Against Sohn, Claiming She Was Against Copyright Protection Due To Her Involvement With A Nonprofit Streaming Service

The National Association Of Broadcasters Launched An Attack On Sohn For Her Involvement In Nonprofit Streaming Network Locast, Claiming She Was Anti-Copyright Projection And Pro-Piracy

November 29, 2021: National Association Of Broadcasters Opposed Sohn's Nomination For Her Involvement In Nonprofit Streaming Service Locast, Painting Her As Anti-Copyright And Pro-Piracy.

"NAB strongly supports Congress's desire to have a fully seated Federal Communications Commission as soon as possible. Although NAB does not currently oppose the nomination of Gigi Sohn, we have serious concerns about her involvement as one of three directors of the illegal streaming service Locast. 'NAB is confident that these concerns can be resolved. However, the ethics agreement that Ms. Sohn submitted to the Senate currently does not adequately address the inherent conflict presented by her recent leadership position at Locast and her potential role as an FCC commissioner. NAB is actively working with members of the Senate Commerce Committee and the White House to address this conflict and requests that Ms. Sohn submit an amended ethics agreement that meaningfully and effectively addresses this clear and troubling conflict.'" [NAB, [11/29/21](#)]

- **Locast Was A Non-Profit TV Streaming Service That Streamed Local Access News And Was Disbanded After A Federal Court Ruled That Such Broadcasts Were Not Copyright Exempt.** "In a blow to millions of people who rely on local television broadcasts, a federal court ruled yesterday that the nonprofit TV-streaming service Locast is not protected by an exception to copyright created by Congress to ensure that every American has access to their local stations. Locast is evaluating the ruling and considering its next steps." [Electronic Frontier Foundation, [9/01/21](#)]

Advocacy Group One Country Launched A Multi-State Ad Campaign Alleging Sohn Opposed Rural Broadband

Advocacy Group One Country Launched A Multi State Ad Campaign Alleging Sohn Opposed Rural Broadband. "One Country's campaign is rolling out in six states, including Arizona and West Virginia — a clear signal that it's aimed at Democratic Sens. Kyrsten Sinema and Mark Kelly of Arizona and Joe Manchin III of West Virginia, the cabal that sank the Weil nomination. Let's examine One Country's claim that Sohn has opposed the rollout of broadband internet access to rural communities. One Country provides two nuggets of evidence to support this assertion. Both are misleading to the point of fabrication." [LA Times, [5/19/22](#)]

Industry Groups USTelecom And NCTA-The Internet & Television Associated Originated Criticisms Of Sohn Related To Her Promise To Recuse Herself From Some Broadcasting Matters

January 27, 2022: Sohn Agreed To Recuse Herself From Some Broadcasting Matters Related To Her Work At Public Knowledge. "Sohn agreed to recuse herself from matters involving retransmission consent or television broadcast copyright for the first three years of her term, in a letter to P. Michele Ellison, the FCC's acting general counsel. Sohn also said she would recuse herself for four years from a docket concerning the rules governing retransmission consent or any related FCC dockets, according to the letter obtained by Bloomberg Law. As president of Public Knowledge, Sohn in 2010 signed a petition for rulemaking urging the FCC to amend and supplement the rules governing retransmission consent that became the basis for that docket." [Bloomberg Law, [1/27/22](#)]

February 1, 2022: Industry Groups USTelecom And NCTA-The Internet & Television Association Wrote A Letter To Senators Questioning Why Sohn Was Only Recusing Herself From Issues Related To

Broadcasting Despite Her Advocacy At Public Knowledge Extended Beyond Broadcasting. “The letters came from USTelecom, with members including AT&T Inc. and Verizon Communications Inc., and from NCTA-The Internet & Television Association, with members including Comcast Corp. and Charter Communications Inc. Each trade group asked why Sohn’s recusal should be limited to the broadcast issues, given her broad advocacy over the years. USTelecom said it hadn’t taken a stance on Sohn’s nomination and NCTA said it didn’t oppose her.” [Bloomberg, [2/01/22](#)]

The U.S. Chamber Of Commerce Claimed That Sohn’s Net Neutrality Policy Led To An Unprecedented Slowdown In Broadband Investment

The Chamber Of Commerce Launched An Attack Claiming That Net Neutrality Led To An Unprecedented Slowdown In Broadband Investment

March 2022: The Chamber Of Commerce Claimed That Net Neutrality, Which Sohn Supported, Led To An Unprecedented Slowdown In Broadband Investment. “Ms. Sohn is one of the leading advocates for policies that amount to regulatory overreach in the broadband market. She was a strong supporter of the 2015 Open Internet Order which regulated broadband like a public utility under Title II of the Communications Act. This policy led to the decline in private sector broadband investment for the first time outside a national economic slowdown.” [US Chamber Of Commerce, [3/02/22](#)]

The Fraternal Order Of Police Attacked Sohn’s Nomination Over Her Support Of Encryption On Twitter

The Fraternal Order Of Police Attacked Sohn’s Nomination Due To Her Support For Encryption

The Fraternal Order Of Police Wrote A Letter To Democratic Senators Urging Them To Oppose Sohn’s Nomination Due To Her Support For Encryption. “Critics have found fodder in her trail of public comments including tweets critical of Fox News, and her service on boards including that of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, which supports strong encryption. Law enforcement groups support strong encryption but want technology companies to comply with subpoenas allowing investigators access to evidence, including the contents of communications. The Fraternal Order of Police said it discerned a “serious animus towards law enforcement officers and the rule of law” from Sohn’s retweets and likes on Twitter.” [Bloomberg, [4/19/22](#)]

Conservative Non-Profit The American Accountability Foundation Attacked Sohn, Claiming She Thought Those Opposed To Her Were Racist

The American Accountability Foundation Launched An Attack On Sohn, Claiming She Thought Opponents To Her Nomination Were Racist

American Accountability Foundation: Sohn Thinks Senators Who Oppose Her Nomination Are Racist.



RIGHT-WING FUNDING

The Wall Street Journal, Fox News, And New York Post Are Owned By Conservative Media Magnate Rupert Murdoch

Rupert Murdoch Purchased The Wall Street Journal's Publishing Company In 2007 And Took Over The Journal's Ownership. "Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation (NWS) put in a takeover bid for Dow Jones & Company in 2007—an offer that was initially rejected by the Bancrofts. The family agreed to the deal several months later, selling the WSJ for \$5 billion or \$60 per share. The deal, which ended the 105-year-long ownership by the Bancroft family, was \$2.25 billion—a 67% premium—over the announced market price on the day the offer first was announced. At the time, the newspaper industry was struggling, and many prominent daily papers already closed or drastically reduced production. Murdoch's deal, therefore, was extremely attractive. News Corp. took over ownership of the WSJ as well as other Dow Jones assets including the Dow Jones Newswire." [Investopedia, [8/26/20](#)]

Rupert Murdoch Is A Conservative Media Magnate And The Owner Of Fox News, The New York Post, Harper Collins As Well As High Profile Tabloids In Australia And The UK. "Rupert Murdoch is a renowned media executive, co-chairman of the Fox Corporation, and the executive chairman of News Corp, the parent company of The Wall Street Journal, HarperCollins, and the New York Post. [...] By 1969, News Corp bought the Daily Mirror in Sydney, launched a national newspaper, The Australian, and purchased newspapers The Sun and News of the World in the United Kingdom." [Investopedia, [6/13/20](#)]

The National Association Of Broadcasters, USTelecom, And NCTA-The Internet Are Trade Associations For The Broadcasting, Cable, And Broadband Industries

The National Association Of Broadcasters Is An Industry Trade Group That Represents Radio And Television Broadcasting Companies

The National Association Of Broadcasters Is An Industry Trade Group That Represents Radio And Television Broadcasting Companies. “The National Association of Broadcasters is the voice for the nation's radio and television broadcasters. As the premier trade association for broadcasters, NAB advances the interests of our members in federal government, industry and public affairs; improves the quality and profitability of broadcasting; encourages content and technology innovation; and spotlights the important and unique ways stations serve their communities.” [NAB, [Accessed 6/14/22](#)]

USTelecom And NCTA-The Internet Are Trade Associations That Represent The Broadband Industry

USTelecom Is The National Trade Association Representing The Broadband Industry. “USTelecom is the national trade association representing technology providers, innovators, suppliers, and manufacturers committed to connecting the world through the power of broadband. Learn more about joining us and check out our member spotlights.” [US Telecom, [Accessed 6/16/22](#)]

- **Members Of USTelecom Include Verizon And AT&T.** “The letters came from USTelecom, with members including AT&T Inc. and Verizon Communications Inc., and from NCTA-The Internet & Television Association, with members including Comcast Corp. and Charter Communications Inc.” [Bloomberg, [2/01/22](#)]

NCTA Is A Trade Association For The Broadband And Cable Industry. “We are the nation's largest broadband provider with fiber-rich networks reaching over 90% of all U.S. homes, offering 1 gig speeds to millions in urban and rural communities. NCTA members are also TV networks with a rich history of creating award-winning programming.” [NCTA, [Accessed 6/16/22](#)]

- **NCTA Members Include Comcast, Charter Communications, Cox Communications, GCI, Mediacom, And Midco.** “The nation's largest U.S. broadband providers, including Comcast, Charter Communications, Cox Communications, GCI, Mediacom, Midco and others are our members.” [NCTA, [Accessed 6/16/22](#)]

One Country Is An 501(c)(4) Set Up By Former Democratic Senators Heidi Heitkamp And Joe Donnelly That Has Ties To The Telecom Industry

One Country Is A 501(C)(4) Advocacy Group Set Up By Former Democratic Senators Heidi Heitkamp And Joe Donnelly That Was Started Using Leftover Campaign Funds From Heitkamp. “Last month, former Sens. Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D., and Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., announced the launch of the One Country Project, a 501(c)(4) nonprofit, to bring rural voters back to the Democratic Party. The group has already started working with the Democratic National Committee, according to Axios. Time Magazine reported that Heitkamp is using “leftover campaign funds” for the project.” [The Intercept, [5/14/20](#)]

One Country's Website Is Registered To An Executive At Lobbying Giant Forbes Tate Partners.

“Records show that the One Country Project's website is registered to an executive at Forbes Tate Partners, a lobbying and public relations firm founded by former Clinton administration officials. The lobbying firm is leading the Partnership for America's Health Care Future, or PAHCF, the health industry-backed

nonprofit created to crush momentum for a comprehensive universal health care system.” [The Intercept, [5/14/20](#)]

Forbes Tate Has Represented Verizon, Frontier Communications, Wireless Industry Lobbying Group CIATA And The Internet And Television Association.“ One Country has links to the telecom industry via the lobbying firm Forbes-Tate, whose partners helped Heitkamp set up the organization’s website and provided other services, according to the Intercept. Among Forbes-Tate’s clients have been Verizon, Frontier Communications, the wireless industry lobbying organization CTIA and the Internet and Television Assn., or NCTA.” [LA Times, [5/19/22](#)]

American Accountability Foundation Is Closely Tied To The Conservative Partnership Institute, A Group Funded By A Trump PAC And Founded By Ex-Heritage Foundation Head Jim DeMint

The American Accountability Foundation’s IRS Form 1023 Lists The Conservative Partnership Institute As Its “Care Of Name” And The Two Organizations Share An Address

The American Accountability Foundation’s IRS Form 1023 Lists The Conservative Partnership Institute As Its “Care Of Name.”

Part I Identification of Applicant			
1a Full Name of Organization (exactly as it appears in your organizing document) AMERICAN ACCOUNTABILITY FOUNDATION		b Care of Name (if applicable) CONSERVATIVE PARTNERSHIP INSTITUTE	
c Mailing Address (Number, street and room/suite) 300 INDEPENDENCE AVE SE		d City WASHINGTON	e Country UNITED STATES
f State DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	g Zip Code + 4 20003	h Foreign Province (or State)	i Foreign Postal Code

[American Accountability Foundation IRS Form 1023, 1/25/21, Page 1]

American Accountability Foundation And Conservative Partnership Institute Share An Address

c Name of organization Conservative Partnership Institute	
Doing business as	
Number and street (or P.O. box if mail is not delivered to street address) 300 Independence Ave SE	Room/suite
City or town, state or province, country, and ZIP or foreign postal code Washington, DC 20003	

[Conservative Partnership Institute IRS Form [2019 990](#), Page 1]

The Conservative Partnership Institute Was Founded By Former Senator And Heritage Foundation Head Jim DeMint, Who Previously Employed Leading American Accountability Foundation Staff In His Senate Office

Former Senator And Heritage Foundation Head Jim DeMint (R – SC) Founded The Conservative Partnership Institute In 2017. “Former Sen. Jim DeMint will serve as chairman of the new Conservative Partnership Institute to fortify the presence of conservatives in Washington, he said in a news release Tuesday, adding that he thinks the status quo is hindering the development of conservative lawmakers and staffers. [...] Previously, DeMint served at the helm of the Heritage Foundation, a venerable conservative think tank that at times has had a turbulent relationship with the rise of Donald Trump.” [Politico, [7/25/17](#)]

- **The Conservative Partnership Institute Was Created To Place Right-Wing Lawmakers Into Powerful Positions In The White House And Congress.** “The backdrop: DeMint founded CPI

because he felt the conservative movement did a lousy job at helping members of Congress be effective legislators once they get to D.C. His team has since focused on placing conservatives in prime spots in the Trump administration and Capitol Hill, and has trained staff on strategy and congressional rules and procedure.” [Axios, [1/27/21](#)]

Both Of American Accountability Foundation’s Founders, Tom Jones And Matt Buckham, Worked For Jim DeMint. “AAF is led by Tom Jones and Matt Buckham. [...] While on Capitol Hill he served as the Legislative Director for Senator Ron Johnson, ran the opposition research program for Cruz for President, and previously as a Senior Policy Advisor to Senator Jim DeMint. [...] Previously, he served as a legislative aide to former Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC), Senior Advisor to the House Freedom Caucus, and in various positions with conservative non-profit organizations.” [American Accountability Foundation, [Accessed 3/17/22](#)]

Leading Members Of The American Accountability Foundation Currently Work At The Conservative Partnership Institute And Even More Are Former Employees

Ed Corrigan, The Treasurer-Director Of The American Accountability Foundation, Is The President CEO OF The Conservative Partnership Institute. [CPI.org, [Accessed 3/17/21](#)]

- **Corrigan Is The Treasurer-Director Of The American Accountability Foundation**

First Name: ED	Last Name: CORRIGAN	Title: TREASURER - DIRECTOR
Mailing Address: 300 INDEPENDENCE AVE SE	City: WASHINGTON	
State (or Province): DC	Zip Code (or Foreign Postal Code): 20003	
First Name:	Last Name:	Title:

[American Accountability Foundation IRS Form 1023, 1/25/21, Page 1]

Wesley Denton, The Secretary-Director Of The American Accountability Foundation, Is The COO Of The Conservative Partnership Institute. [CPI.org, [Accessed 3/17/21](#)]

- **Wesley Denton Is American Accountability Foundation’s Secretary-Director**

State (or Province): DC	Zip Code (or Foreign Postal Code): 20003	
First Name: WESLEY	Last Name: DENTON	Title: SECRETARY - DIRECTOR
Mailing Address: 300 INDEPENDENCE AVE SE	City: WASHINGTON	
State (or Province): DC	Zip Code (or Foreign Postal Code): 20003	
First Name: ED	Last Name: CORRIGAN	Title: TREASURER - DIRECTOR
Mailing Address: 300 INDEPENDENCE AVE SE	City: WASHINGTON	

[American Accountability Foundation IRS Form 1023, 1/25/21, Page 1]

American Accountability Foundation Founder Matt Buckham Worked For The Conservative Partnership Institute At Its Inception. “DeMint has hired several former Heritage staffers for his new outfit, including Wesley Denton, Matt Buckham, Rachel Bovard, and Megan Tubb.” [Think Tank Watch, [10/27/17](#)]

- **Buckham Is One Of American Accountability Foundation’s Two Founders.** “AAF is led by Tom Jones and Matt Buckham. [...] While on Capitol Hill he served as the Legislative Director for Senator Ron Johnson, ran the opposition research program for Cruz for President, and previously as a Senior Policy Advisor to Senator Jim DeMint. [...] Previously, he served as a legislative aide to former Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC), Senior Advisor to the House Freedom Caucus, and in various positions with conservative non-profit organizations.” [American Accountability Foundation, [Accessed 3/17/22](#)]

The Conservative Partnership Institute Was Heavily Financed By Trump’s Own PAC

Shortly After Congress Launched The Committee To Investigate The Capitol Riot, Trump’s PAC Donated \$1 Million To The Conservative Partnership Institute. “Former President Donald Trump’s political action committee donated \$1 million to the conservative nonprofit organization where his former chief of staff, Mark Meadows, is a senior partner, according to a campaign finance report filed with the Federal Election

Commission Monday night. [...] The tax-deductible seven-figure contribution to the Conservative Partnership Institute is by far the largest chunk of \$1.35 million in donations Trump's "Save America" PAC made to political allies over the last six months of 2021, according to the campaign finance report. [...] On July 1, the House voted to establish a select committee to investigate the Capitol attack." [CNBC, [2/01/22](#)]

Trump's Former Chief Of Staff, Mark Meadows, Joined The Conservative Partnership Institute While He Was Advising Trump On His Impeachment Trial Following The Incitement Of Insurrection At The Capitol. "Former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows is joining the Conservative Partnership Institute, a group run by former South Carolina Sen. Jim DeMint that operates as a "networking hub" for conservatives, sources familiar with his plans tell Axios. Between the lines: Meadows, who is still in frequent contact with former President Trump and has been advising him ahead of his impeachment trial, will now operate behind the scenes to help create more members like Jim Jordan, Ted Cruz, and Josh Hawley — conservative firebrands with strong networks and staffs." [Axios, [1/27/21](#)]

- **Meadows Is A Senior Partner At The Conservative Partnership Institute.** "Former President Donald Trump's political action committee donated \$1 million to the conservative nonprofit organization where his former chief of staff, Mark Meadows, is a senior partner, according to a campaign finance report filed with the Federal Election Commission Monday night." [CNBC, [2/01/22](#)]

Trump's PAC Donation To The Institute Came After Congress Recommended The Justice Department Charge Meadows Over His Refusal To Cooperate With Investigations Regarding The Capitol Riot. "In December, the House voted to recommend that the Justice Department pursue contempt of Congress charges against Meadows over his refusal to cooperate with an investigation into the Trump-inspired Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol." [CNBC, [2/01/22](#)]

ATTACKS AGAINST SOHN DURING HEARINGS

Numerous Senators Parroted Attacks On Sohn That Originated From Murdoch Media Properties, Claiming She Was A Partisan Who Opposed Conservative Media

Sens. Cruz, Tillis, Blount, Wick And Graham Echoed The Wall Street Journal's Criticism Of Sohn As A Partisan—With Graham Sharing The Op-Ed That Originated The Claims

Sen. Graham (R – SC) Called Sohn "Unqualified" And An "Ideologue" In Response To The Wall Street Journal Editorial That Opposed Sohn For Supposed Anti-Conservative Bias.



[Twitter, [11/09/21](#)]

Sen. Roger Wicker (R – MS) Claimed Sohn’s History Of “Hyper-Partisan” Tweets Jeopardized Her Confirmation. “All who know her would agree she is knowledgeable and a determined advocate,” ranking member Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) said in his opening statement about Sohn. “I am concerned about her record of expressing hyper-partisan views on many critical matters that have come before the commission and which may come before the commission again in the future.” [The Hill, [12/01/21](#)]

December 1, 2021: Sen Dan Sullivan (R – AK) Accused Sohn Of Being Biased Against Conservative Speech And Said It Disqualified Her. “You are now up for confirmation of one of the most powerful positions on free speech,” said Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan, referring to Sohn’s past criticism of conservative media, including Fox News. “I think that disqualifies you completely.” [Protocol, [12/01/21](#)]

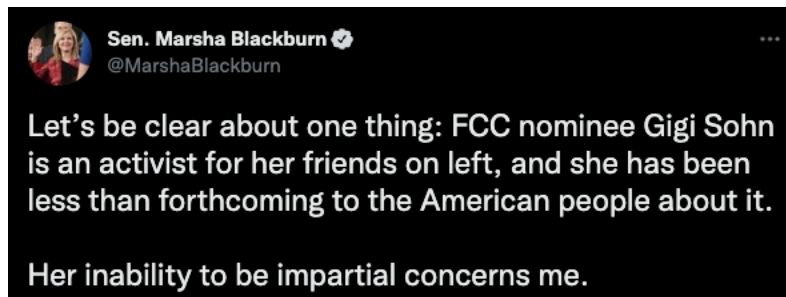
- **Sullivan Attacked Sohn For Her Previous Comments On Fox News.** “Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, also took Sohn to task over her comments against Republicans, quipping that having some “nasty tweets against Republicans” is a good way to get into the Biden Administration.” [Fox Business, [12/01/21](#)]
- **Sullivan Accused Sohn Of “Purging” Her Twitter Account** “It seems like one of the ways you get nominated for a position in this administration is if you have some really good, nasty tweets against Republicans. It’s the way you get nominated—the numbers are going through the roof. You kind of take the case [sic] on this with regards to tweets that I find not only very troubling—you know, Republicans are racist, the usual BS. I noticed you purged your account. Did you do that for a reason?” [Ars Technica, [12/01/21](#)]

- **Sullivan Specifically Attacked Sohn For Her Previous Comments On Fox News.** “Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, also took Sohn to task over her comments against Republicans, quipping that having some “nasty tweets against Republicans” is a good way to get into the Biden Administration.” [Fox Business, [12/01/21](#)]

Sen. Roy Blunt (R – MO) Questioned Sohn Over Her Anti-Fox News Tweets. “Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO) asked Sohn whether she is biased against Fox News. “You are referring to my tweets that are now pretty famous,” she answered. “I understand they are concerning to some, and anyone who knows me knows that I am pretty direct. But they were made in my role as a public interest advocate. ... Maybe the tone was a little sharper, maybe I should have dulled it a little bit, but again, it was part of my job as a public interest advocate.” [Deadline, [12/01/21](#)]

Sen. Ted Cruz (R – TX) Questioned Sohn About Her Anti-Fox News Statements. “Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska) repeated arguments previously made by Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and The Wall Street Journal editorial board, which mostly boil down to complaints about Sohn's tweets criticizing Fox News and her criticism of Sinclair Broadcast Group. In the Sinclair case, as we previously wrote, Sohn was actually on the same side as then-FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. Pai led a unanimous FCC vote that blocked Sinclair's attempt to purchase Tribune Media Company because of evidence that Sinclair's merger plan was illegal. [Ars Technica, [12/01/21](#)]

Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R – TN) Criticized Sohn As A Partisan “Activist” Who Is Unable To Be Impartial.



[Twitter, [2/09/22](#)]

Republican Senators Attacked Sohn For Her Role In A Nonprofit Media Venture, Echoing Attacks By The Broadband Industry—Senator Tillis Sent A Letter On The Issue Days After The Broadband Industry Made A Statement On The Subject

Sen. Tillis Sent A Letter To President Biden Opposing Sohn’s Nomination Due To Her Involvement In Nonprofit Streaming Service Locast The Day After The National Association Of Broadcasters Released A Statement Raising Similar Concerns

November 30, 2021: Sen. Tom Tillis (R – NC) Sent A Letter To President Biden Urging Sohn’s Withdrawal Due To Her Role With Locast. “Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) sent a letter Tuesday night to Biden calling for the withdrawal of her nomination because of her time on the board. It’s unclear whether there’s enough Senate opposition to Sohn to derail her nomination. Tillis Wednesday said he hoped his request to Biden to withdraw Sohn gained traction.” [Broadcasting + Cable, [12/06/21](#)]

Tillis Opposed Sohn’s Nomination Over Being Allegedly Anti-Copyright And Pro-Piracy Because Of Her Involvement In Locast. “Webb did say why the hold was being placed. In asking the president to withdraw her nomination, Tillis pointed to her “history as an anti-copyright activist” — including her support for

TV signal streamer Locast, which a court said was not eligible for the copyright exemption it asserted.” [Broadcasting + Cable, [12/06/21](#)]

Tillis’ Letter Came One Day After The National Association Of Broadcasters Issued A Statement Over Sohn’s Involvement In Locast. ‘NAB strongly supports Congress’s desire to have a fully seated Federal Communications Commission as soon as possible. Although NAB does not currently oppose the nomination of Gigi Sohn, we have serious concerns about her involvement as one of three directors of the illegal streaming service Locast. ‘NAB is confident that these concerns can be resolved. However, the ethics agreement that Ms. Sohn submitted to the Senate currently does not adequately address the inherent conflict presented by her recent leadership position at Locast and her potential role as an FCC commissioner. NAB is actively working with members of the Senate Commerce Committee and the White House to address this conflict and requests that Ms. Sohn submit an amended ethics agreement that meaningfully and effectively addresses this clear and troubling conflict.’” [NAB, [11/29/21](#)]

Sens. Wicker, Thune, And Cruz Criticized Sohn For Misrepresenting Her Role In A Locast Lawsuit, Echoing The New York Post’s Op-Ed

February 9, 2022: Sen. Roger Wicker (R – MS) Criticized Sohn For Her Misrepresenting Her Role In A Locast Lawsuit. “Respectfully Senator, I could not talk about the \$700,000,” Sohn said in response to questions from Wicker on her transparency. “I answered it directly and honestly as I could.” Wicker also questioned if Sohn’s recusals were voluntary, to which Sohn said yes. Sohn said she sought counsel from ethics officials at the FCC on the recusal decision and that the White House did not directly encourage her choice.” [SP Global, [2/09/22](#)]

Sen. Ted Cruz Criticized Sohn For Misrepresenting Her Role In The Locast Lawsuit. “Later, Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, read the contract Sohn signed out loud. “Last time I checked, the U.S. Senate is not the press. There is nothing in this document that prohibits you from disclosing to the Senate,” said Ted Cruz” [Broadband Breakfast, [2/10/22](#)]

Sen. John Thune (R – SD) Accused Sohn Of Misrepresenting The Conflicts Of Interest Presented By Her Role In Locast. “Gigi Sohn is not fit to serve at the FCC,” Republican Sen. John Thune of South Dakota said Wednesday. “She has deceived senators about business conflicts, recused herself from certain FCC matters, and called conservative outlets ‘state-sponsored propaganda.’” [Deadline, [2/09/22](#)]

January 29, 2022: The New York Post Published An Op-Ed Accusing Sohn Of Misrepresenting Her Role In A Locast Settlement. “Parties, including Sohn, signed the paperwork a day after she was nominated by Biden to the FCC, which means it appears that the broadcasters and Locast were negotiating the seemingly light terms knowing full well she was on her way possibly becoming their regulator. The backstory on all of this could derail Sohn’s nomination as it makes it way to a vote in the Commerce Committee this Wednesday, telecom insiders tell me. Roger Wicker, the ranking Republican on the committee, questioned Sohn during her Dec. 1 hearing. He then asked her in writing how Locast came up with the full \$32 million payment to the broadcasters — a seemingly big chunk of change for an outfit billed as a not-for-profit.” [Op-Ed, New York Post, [1/29/22](#)]

Numerous Senators Echoed Concerns Similar To Those From The Broadband Industry And Questioned Her Pledge To Recuse Herself In Certain Matters

Sens Sullivan, Wicker, And Thune Questioned Sohn’s Partial Recusals And Asked Why She Shouldn’t Recuse Herself More Broadly, Echoing The Attacks Of Broadband Trade Associations USTelecom And NCTA

February 9, 2022: Sen Dan Sullivan (R – AK) Said Her Previous Work With Public Knowledge Caused Too Many Conflicts Of Interest For Her To Be Confirmed. “Republicans have raised concern that Sohn, who previously led a liberal group called Public Knowledge, could weaponize the FCC for political purposes. Sullivan also touched on whether Sohn, who recused herself regarding issues related to her time at a nonprofit called Locast, should also recuse herself regarding the 1,100 public filings Public Knowledge made while she was president of the organization. “The 1,100 different public filings by Public Knowledge all go to the heart of matters that you’re going to be empowered to rule on,” said Sullivan, later adding, “I think you should be recused on the 1,100 public filings, and if that’s the case, you might as well not even be confirmed, because you weighed in on almost everything.” [Fox News, [2/09/22](#)]

March 17, 2022: Sen. Thune (R -SD) Asked: “But Why On Earth Should We Choose A Commissioner Who Would Have To Recuse Herself From Participating In Substantial Parts Of The FCC’s Work?” “After questions were raised about her involvement with this company’s settlement with broadcasters, she did volunteer to recuse herself – if she’s confirmed – on a variety of issues related to broadcasting and copyright violations. But why on earth should we choose a commissioner who would have to recuse herself from participating in substantial parts of the FCC’s work?” [Sen. John Thune’s Office, [3/17/22](#)]

Sen. Roget Wicker (R- MS), On Behalf Of The Republican Minority On The Senate Commerce Committee, Questioned Why Sohn Should Only Partially Recuse Herself From Some FCC Matters Given Her Broad Advocacy At Public Knowledge. “However, in a puzzling move, she based this recusal on a single filing at the Commission while she was President of the advocacy group, Public Knowledge. If Ms. Sohn feels that she cannot be viewed as impartial on matters related to this particular filing and docket, should that same rationale extend to the many other matters that Public Knowledge submitted filings on during her tenure?” [Senate Commerce Committee, [2/09/22](#)]

February 1, 2022: Industry Groups USTelecom And NCTA-The Internet & Television Association Wrote A Letter To Senators Questioning Why Sohn Was Only Recusing Herself From Issues Related To Broadcasting Even Though Her Advocacy At Public Knowledge Extended Beyond Broadcasting. “The letters came from USTelecom, with members including AT&T Inc. and Verizon Communications Inc., and from NCTA-The Internet & Television Association, with members including Comcast Corp. and Charter Communications Inc. Each trade group asked why Sohn’s recusal should be limited to the broadcast issues, given her broad advocacy over the years. USTelecom said it hadn’t taken a stance on Sohn’s nomination and NCTA said it didn’t oppose her.” [Bloomberg, [2/01/22](#)]

Senators Attacked Sohn For Her Role Advocating For Net Neutrality, Another Concern Echoed By The The Broadband Industry

Sens. Thune And Wicker Criticized Sohn For Her Stance On Of Net Neutrality.

November 1, 2021: Sen. John Thune (R – SD) Said Sohn Is “Very Left” On Regulatory Issues Like Net Neutrality. “Sohn, obviously, her views are going to be very far apart from where mine are on all the issues,” Senate Minority Whip John Thune told POLITICO. “She’s very left, she’s going to be a heavy hand in regulation, very heavy in net neutrality.” “She’s going to be very much, I think, Big Government stepping on the scales,” the South Dakota Republican added.” [Politico, [11/01/21](#)]

Sen. Roger Wicker (R – MS), A Noted Opponent Of Net Neutrality, Said He Was Concerned By Sohn’s Pro-Net Neutrality Stance During Her First Confirmation Hearing. “Early on in the hearing, Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), the ranking member of the committee, who has blocked attempts in the past by Democrats to force a vote on net neutrality bills, said that he had concerns about Sohn’s previous statements about issues that might come up at the committee, noting her long-time advocacy of net neutrality.” [Daily Dot, [12/01/21](#)]