



POSITION STATEMENT

Democratic Use of Artificial Intelligence

Adopted by the IEEE-USA Board of Directors (November 2024)

IEEE-USA believes that while AI systems can increase quality of life, improve government efficiency, and promote societal well-being, when used improperly or by malicious actors, the technology can also jeopardize human rights, violate the U.S. Constitution, create and amplify harmful mis- and disinformation, and pose severe threats to privacy. To help ensure AI systems promote - rather than threaten - democratic values, IEEE-USA recommends the U.S. Government:

1. Encourage Technical Standards and International Agreements

While considerable progress has been made in declarations on the ethical use of AI systems by governments, corporations, and international organizations, a need exists for additional efforts linking national and international work to address the development and use of AI technologies in ways that support democracy. We recommend the U.S. Government:

- Lead the development, promotion, and refinement of relevant frameworks among allies and like-minded democratic countries. The United States can achieve such leadership by:
 - promoting and encouraging the development of global technical standards,
 - engaging in diplomacy, defined by efforts specifically focused on promoting human rights and democratic values in the context of AI,
 - ensuring strong domestic and international intellectual property protections, and
 - strengthening both domestic public policies and international agreements on the ethical uses of AI systems; as well as how data is collected, used, and retired.
- Undertake and promote collaboration with industry, academics, and other stakeholders in relevant technical and social scientific fields, within the context of this common framework.

2. Promote Transparency, Human Agency, and Accountability to Reduce the Promotion of Extremism, Misinformation, Abuse, and Disinformation

AI systems, such as those that drive content recommendation systems online platforms use, can create harmful echo chambers. To mitigate the potentially negative impacts of these systems; and to ensure the public understands who is attempting to influence them (and how they are doing it), we recommend that the U.S. Government:

- Establish clear transparency standards to ensure that users understand why they were shown certain content, particularly when it may result from commercial, or foreign entity activity.
- Invest in technical literacy efforts to improve public understanding of what personal information AI systems may be inferring about users, and how these systems can influence user thinking.
- Partner with like-minded democratic countries to establish transparent ethical guidelines for the use and accountability of AI systems that may manipulate individuals or influence public opinion.

3. Promote Enjoyment of Human Rights through the Rule of Law, Strong Privacy Protections, and Democratic Governance of AI

To encourage the development and implementation of AI systems respecting human rights, we recommend the U.S. Government:

- Establish principles for the design and operational use of AI systems that help prevent violations of human rights and the U.S. Constitution.
- Create accountability mechanisms for groups deploying AI systems having the potential to violate human rights or the U.S. Constitution.
- Require disclosure of when AI and automated decision systems are used; and how their use may impact users.
- Increase investments in research on the human rights impacts of AI systems.

To ensure popular online platforms are using AI systems promote democracy, we recommend that the U.S. Government:

- Create partnerships between government, industry, academia, and other stakeholders to monitor the spread and impacts of mis- and disinformation, extremist content, and foreign malign influence on internet platforms, subject to appropriate legal and constitutional limitations.
- Place restrictions on the personal data foreign-operated internet platforms can collect about U.S. users to mitigate the risk of anti-democratic actors from performing sophisticated microtargeting of propaganda.

To promote the democratic governance of AI systems, we recommend the U.S. Government:

- Increase investment in public education about potential impacts of AI (including both its capabilities and limitations).
- Develop mechanisms for soliciting broad public input on the governance of AI, particularly from marginalized or vulnerable communities.

To promote the right of privacy, we recommend the U.S. Government:

- Develop and implement comprehensive privacy laws governing the use of personal data explicitly addressing the use of such data in developing all artificial intelligence and machine learning systems and applications (AI/ML); and ensuring individuals provide explicit consent, where appropriate, before their data can be used for any commercial purpose.
- Mandate that the development and use of AI applications leveraging consumer data have a fully functional data governance model, with clearly defined ethical use and privacy policies.
- Establish a framework to support the privacy policy and ethical model applicable for both commercial and non-commercial purposes.

To ensure the continued growth of AI/ML while maintaining strong protections for data privacy, the U.S. Government should consider developing resources to share voluntarily provided datasets for AI research and development work.

4. Protect Intellectual Property (IP) From Manipulation, including Theft, Excessive Patent Filing, and Abuse Caused by Incorporating Patented Technology into International Technical Standards

IP protections should be a national priority, with special commitment to enhancement around AI-related emerging technologies. We recommend that the U.S. Government:

- Combat any actions that would directly or indirectly negatively influence international standards setting activities.
- Combat the injection of a large body of low-quality prior art that would adversely impact the United States Patent and Trademark Office.
- Continue and expand efforts to counter and sanction the foreign theft of intellectual property through hacking, espionage, blackmail, and illicit technology transfer.

5. Clarify the Lines Between Free Speech and Censorship in Content Moderation

AI systems can be used to select, target, promote, and generate content, often creating or amplifying content that many consider to be false or harmful. Given the exponentially increasing quantity of content, and lack of knowledge of its source, individuals are often disadvantaged in verifying the accuracy and origin of this content. Actions and mechanisms to rectify these problems must be carefully balanced with freedom of expression, without affecting individual freedom of expression. We recommend that the U.S. Government:

- Establish guidelines clarifying content moderator's rights and responsibilities for regulating speech that balance openness, transparency, and free speech with platforms' right to control their products.
- Require that AI systems, limited in their ability to detect harmful content accurately and transparently, not be relied upon for content moderation without safeguards.
- Require that internet platforms and AI developers provide, subject to appropriate privacy restrictions, the data necessary for researchers and the public to independently evaluate the extent of possible manipulation or abuse.
- Scale policies and guidelines for accounts and platforms so that they increase with the size of their audiences and reach.
- Establish guidelines for transparent content moderation policies that limit:
 - the ability to create fake accounts to promote or amplify messages at large scale;
 - the ability to spread artificially generated harmful audio, video or photographic material that appropriate or mimic real people without consent ("deepfakes"); and
 - the ability to spread messages that are factually incorrect or carefully crafted to manipulate and mislead.

This statement was developed by the IEEE-USA Artificial Intelligence Policy Committee and represents the considered judgment of a group of U.S. IEEE members with expertise in the subject field. IEEE-USA advances the public good and promotes the careers and public policy interests of the nearly 150,000 engineering, computing, and allied professionals who are U.S. members of the IEEE. The positions taken by IEEE-USA do not necessarily reflect the views of IEEE or its other organizational units.