

# Candidate Statement – James Bladel

## ICANN Board Seat 13

Contracted Parties (Registry/Registrar Stakeholder Groups)

Name - James Bladel (He/Him)

Affiliation - GoDaddy, an RrSG (voting) and RySG (non-voting) member.

Position - Vice President, Gov't and Industry Affairs

Nationality and Residence - United States/North America

### **Introduction**

My name is James Bladel, and I am a candidate for ICANN Board Seat 13, selected by Contracted Parties. I am currently the Vice President of Government and Industry Affairs at GoDaddy, and I am a resident & citizen of the United States (North American Region).

### **Experience**

For 20 years, I have contributed to ICANN on behalf of Contracted Parties and the GNSO community. It started with joining and then chairing several PDP working groups, which covered topics like domain transfers, WHOIS/RDS, domain expiry, and all the policies supporting new gTLDs. I am an active member of the Registrar Stakeholder Group, representing Registrars on the GNSO Council and served my last 2-year term as GNSO Council Chair.

Beyond policy development, I contributed to the IANA transition effort, representing Registrars on the IANA Coordination Group, the CCWG for (ICANN) Accountability, and was the first GNSO member of the Empowered Community. I served on two AoC Review Teams (WHOIS and Accountability and Transparency), which made impactful recommendations to the ICANN Board.

Additionally, I have experience in direct bilateral negotiations with ICANN. This began with the 2009 version of the RAA, and the more substantial renegotiation in 2013. Next was the Temporary Specification reconciling our contractual WHOIS/RDS obligations with GDPR, and most recently the new RAA amendments covering DNS Abuse.

Beyond ICANN, I have been an industry leader in ccTLDs, including serving on the board of directors for doMEn (dotME), Nominet (dotUK) and the stakeholder council for dotUS. I represent GoDaddy in several industry coalitions and alliances, and I have directly engaged policymakers and government officials in the US, EU, and other countries.

## **Leadership and Consensus Building**

Throughout my career, I have excelled at building and leading effective teams comprised of diverse experts. My original background is technical, but most of my current work is in business and regulatory/political contexts. I am at my best when discussing complex problems, exploring relevant positions and interests, and building consensus with an openness to mutual benefit. My work at GoDaddy has cultivated a global perspective, so I always seek to understand the unique differences across geographic regions, cultures, and languages. Finally, I'm proud to have fostered long standing friendships with folks whose interests diverge from my own.

## **The ICANN Board**

It's important to remember that ICANN directors are fiduciaries for the organization, and do not represent their constituency or company. That said, for the ICANN board to be effective in its dual role of community and organization oversight, it must include industry perspectives. I can be that necessary voice on the ICANN Board. The interests of industry are ever changing, and establishing continuous communication with the RySG and RrSG will ensure that our concerns are heard by the ICANN board and factored into its decisions.

At this point of inflection, I believe ICANN and the multistakeholder model face three distinct challenges. They are interrelated, so success in addressing one can yield progress in the other two.

First, ICANN faces a crisis of credibility, both inside its own community and externally around the world. It has conspicuously failed to make timely progress on key policy initiatives, and instead fallen into endless discussions and efforts to mitigate unknown risks. The net effect fosters perceptions that ICANN is not capable of operationalizing policy decisions that the Community has approved and (in some cases) industry desperately requires. It is easy to point to the next round of gTLD applications, but this narrative applies equally to issues involving registration data, like accuracy and a joint controller agreement.

Secondly, nations across the globe have shown an increased appetite to adopt legislation that governs ICANN's management of the DNS. This is related to the first challenge, in that governments too are growing skeptical of ICANN's ability to implement change. In my view, ICANN's response to this changing regulatory environment has been timid. Again, with respect to taking meaningful policy action, ICANN must stop telling the world why its role is important and start showing clear examples of multistakeholder successes.

Finally, I have spoken and written about emerging decentralized technologies based on Blockchain identifiers some offer as replacements for the DNS. While I do not believe these

systems are viable alternatives, it is worthwhile to explore how they could complement domain names, especially in aftermarket transactions or IP protection. But an even more valuable exercise would be to understand the underlying demand for these systems, and why some stakeholders are actively developing new naming systems.

In all three cases, The ICANN organization and community need informed leadership at the board level, and this requires an industry voice that challenges the status quo and cultivates a sense of urgency, while upholding the collaborative environment that is a feature of the ICANN community. I am ideally suited to be that voice, to help the ICANN address these challenges, developed specific remedies, and develop operational metrics and performance goals that hold the organization accountable to deliver on its commitments to the community. And to ensure fiscal responsibility, protecting registrants from bearing the burden of organizational inefficiencies. In practical terms, this means ICANN must reduce its costs and diversify funding sources before calling for increased registration fees.

The good news is that because these challenges are interconnected, progress made towards one will yield progress on them all. ICANN is unique in its ability to gather the brightest innovators and influential policymakers from around the world to tackle pressing issues facing our industry. It is a mature institution, and yet still adapting to meet the needs of its stakeholders. The potential for ICANN to overcome its obstacles and become a showcase for multistakeholder governance would set an example for other contexts and shared global resources. I would be honored to contribute to the next evolution of ICANN.

### **Declaration of Interests**

I am an employee of GoDaddy, Inc., a publicly traded US company. I am a shareholder in GoDaddy via employee equity programs. My retirement account has a small stake in Microsoft and Amazon, but otherwise I have no direct interest or ownership in any other ICANN contracted parties. I am also an investor and advisor to a GovTech startup.