Senator Schumer Opening Statement
Seventh AI Insight Forum
November 29, 2023

Good afternoon. Welcome to our seventh bipartisan AI Insight Forum, focusing on Transparency, Explainability, Intellectual Property, and Copyright.

As always, I want to thank Senators Rounds, Heinrich, and Young, and their staff, for helping put together today's forum.

Thanks to my Senate colleagues and Senate staff who will be here throughout the afternoon.

And thanks to all the participants. I'm proud we have a balanced group here today to discuss these important topics.

Due to the intertwined nature of these four topics, we opted to have one three hour forum, rather than two separate hour-and-a-half discussions.

I anticipate we will move between the topics a lot during the next three hours, but we expect the first half will focus more on issues in copyright and intellectual property, and the second half will focus more on transparency and explainability.

For everyone's awareness:

I will open up the copyright and intellectual property section with a few questions, then kick it over to Senator Young and then Senator Heinrich, before Senator Rounds closes us out.

Afterward, I will open up the transparency and explainability section before turning it over to Senator Young, then over to Senator Heinrich to close us out.

As we all know, AI is already reshaping our world in dramatic ways, impacting nearly every industry – especially the creative industry.

For generations, the creative touch has been one of the biggest differences between humans and machines. But with the emergence of AI as a creative tool, the line between human and machine works is beginning to blur.

Generative AI is already capable of producing new images, texts, and audio in response to a user's prompts.

However, these programs are trained to generate these outputs by being exposed to large quantities of data, including copyright-protected material, like existing songs, writings, photos, paintings, and other artwork.

This creates a copyright issue on two fronts: the input, or using copyrighted works to train these systems, and the output, or generating work that is in a gray area in terms of legal usage and ownership.

So, I believe there is a role for Congress to play to promote transparency in AI systems and protect the rights of creators.

At the same time, I believe there is a role to play for Congress to enforce strong intellectual property standards for AI internationally.

All while protecting the need to continue innovating around AI, our north star in this endeavor.

Today's AI systems represent some of the most important U.S. intellectual property of our lifetime. Forcing companies to reveal unnecessary amounts of their IP is harmful, it could stifle innovation, and it would empower our adversaries to use them for ill.

But while strong IP standards can protect innovation in AI, the true potential of this technology can only be reached if it is understandable to its users. That's where explainability comes in.

Explainability is a key component of my SAFE Innovation framework that I laid out earlier this year.

At its core, explainability is about transparency. When you ask an AI system a question and it gives you an answer, you should be able to know where that answer came from.

If the user of an AI system cannot determine the source of an answer or an idea, it won't be easy to build trust in AI, preventing AI from reaching its full potential.

So, explainability must be a top priority, and companies must take the lead in helping us make AI systems more transparent. I hope to hear more about what some of you are doing in that regard later in our discussion.

So, thank you all again for being here, and I look forward to our discussion.