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To: Authentication Summit
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The Notices published in the Federal Register (Vol. 69, No. 178 / Wednesday, September 15, 2004 pp.55632-55636) is a very good summary of the basic situation, with one very important omission. The Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) has been considering what is essentially a similar question of the "Sender ID" portion of what the FTC is considering. The IETF working group called the MTA Authorization Records In DNS (MARID) working group, has recent concluded thier work, stating that it was impossible to continue. There are many analyses of the conclusion and what it all means, but for those seeking more information than I can summarize here, I recommend starting with the materials at

<http://www.moongroup.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=2>

Quoting from the above, the following summarizes the essential problem encountered by the working group:

"Throughout the MARID process a consistently recurring issue barred the way to any possibility of consensus on the proposals being considered. This occurred due to overwhelming evidence that the proposed solutions could not be deployed universally as a standard because the various proposals were encumbered by Intellectual Property claims. These claims arose because of a patent application submitted by Microsoft and currently under consideration by the US PTO. Though Microsoft offered to license their technology under terms acceptable to the IETF their license deliberately excluded any possibility that an open source software product could use their technology. This happened because the license Microsoft offered and the licenses used to distribute open source MTA's were wholly incompatible. Many of the corporate representatives involved with the MARID Working Group simply shrugged this off but the more numerous independent members, many of whom use, support, or develop open source software MTA's could not ignore it. This caused an insurmountable disagreement where consensus proved impossible."

Please note at this point that the vast majority of email being delivered today is handled by software written those very independant developers. The "Big Four" of mail transport software (Sendmail, Postfix, Qmail, and Exim) handle nearly every SMTP-delivered mail at some point in the process from the sending user to the receiver, and all are license in terms that are sufficiently "open source-like" to be unable to ignore encumbered intellectual property.

One point that is vitally important to make clear when advising

