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Donald Trump's presidential transition team is turning to a crusader against regulation as it seeks to craft a strategy on issues like net neutrality and the future of the Federal Communications Commission, according to three sources familiar with the effort.

The newly tapped aide, Jeffrey Eisenach, is a known commodity in Washington tech and telecom circles. Dating back to his time as leader of the now-defunct Progress and Freedom Foundation, he's argued vigorously in favor of the FCC taking a hands-off approach to digital issues. While there in the 1990s, he also called for robust penalties against Microsoft during the U.S. government's antitrust investigation of the software giant.

In 2012 Eisenach arrived as a fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute — and in that role, he's been an outspoken antagonist of FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler and his policies. In his research and advocacy, often backed by tech and telecom interests, he's slammed the Obama administration's efforts on net neutrality, broadband investment and more.

Eisenach declined to confirm or deny his role with the campaign when reached by phone late Thursday. The Trump campaign did not respond to a request for comment. But the transition team's nascent telecom effort comes as the Republican nominee scrambles to catch up with his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, who released a full tech policy roadmap in June.

It also marks a shift for Eisenach, who earlier this election cycle had criticized Trump. In

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March, he tweeted that he wouldn't "apologize for pulling out all stops to defeat Trump," citing the stakes in the election. But that tweet, and others critical of the GOP candidate, have since been deleted from his timeline.

He's also been the source of controversy: The New York Times in August needled Eisenach for his research and writing on issues like net neutrality, some of which has been funded by companies like Verizon and other telecom interests that oppose the FCC's rules.

News of Eisenach's role came as Trump's senior transition advisers briefed key leaders in the tech sector today about their next steps. Attending the private, Friday morning session were groups like the Internet Association, the Information Technology Industry Council and BSA | The Software Alliance — advocacy groups that represent companies including Apple, Facebook, Google, Microsoft and Twitter. Representatives from specific companies like Amazon, Facebook, Google, Lyft and Uber also attended, three sources who attended the meeting said.

They heard from Rich Bagger, the executive director of the Trump transition effort; Bill Palatucci, its general counsel; Ado Machida, who heads up policy implementation; and Cam Henderson, finance director for the transition. But Christie, who had initially been billed as taking part, didn't join the meeting because he's on the trail with Trump, according to an updated invite sent Thursday.

The sources who attended the session, which was off the record, later told POLITICO that Trump's team made clear it did not expect to craft a full, new tech platform. But the GOP candidate's aides urged the industry to submit their recommendations for potential federal agency appointments — as well as regulations they'd like to see shredded if Trump is elected president, the sources said.

The meeting also came with a fundraising pitch. In its initial invite, the Trump transition team asked tech participants to consider opening their wallets to help the GOP candidate. Some Silicon Valley giants, like Apple, refused to donate to the GOP convention in July because of Trump's incendiary comments about women, immigrants and minorities.

Eisenach did not attend the session, according to participants. But those familiar with his work say he's playing an early role in advising Trump's transition effort on telecom issues — a topic Trump has rarely mentioned on the campaign trail.

Eisenach is an economist and held key advisory roles at the Federal Trade Commission from 1983 to 1985. He served as an aide at the Office of Management and Budget in the 1980s and landed in 1993 at the Progress and Freedom Foundation, staying there for a decade.

Among his writings as president of the organization, Eisenach and one of his colleagues endorsed one of the most aggressive options available to investigators of the Microsoft case — splitting the tech giant into "four companies from the current one and so restore competition to the market for operating systems." That, he wrote, would be "clearly preferable to other alternatives."

Eisenach departed the group in 2003 and since then has held key roles at firms like NERA Economic Consulting, where he remains a senior vice president. There, he has produced industry-backed research arguing for deregulation of companies.

In 2015, he authored a paper — supported by Internet.org, the internet access project backed by Facebook — that touted the benefits of zero rating, the idea that internet service providers subsidize data charges from particular websites and services. Public

interest groups have called on the FCC to stop the practice, which they say violates net neutrality, the principle that all web traffic should be treated equally.

Eisenach has also testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in recent years in opposition to the FCC net neutrality rules, which remain the subject of a court battle with telecom firms. - *Politico*



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