



ADMINISTRATIVE CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED STATES

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN FEDERAL AGENCIES
Government by Algorithm**

June 25, 2020

TRANSCRIPT
(Not Reviewed for Errors)

Panelists

Justice Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar, Supreme Court of California and Stanford Law School

David Freeman Engstrom, Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives, Stanford Law School; Public Member, Administrative Conference of the United States

Daniel E. Ho, William Benjamin Scott and Luna M. Scott Professor of Law, Stanford Law School

Catherine M. Sharkey, Crystal Eastman Professor of Law, New York University School of Law; Senior Fellow, Administrative Conference of the United States

Moderator

Hillary Brill, Interim Executive Director, Institute for Technology Law and Policy

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Symposium on Artificial Intelligence in Federal
Agencies

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1 (Beginning of audio recording.)

2 MR. WEINER: Good afternoon. I'm Matt Weiner,
3 the vice chair and executive director of the
4 Administrative Conference of the United States, ACUS,
5 for short. We'll begin now -- we are waiting for two
6 of our participants. We're not waiting so much as
7 trying to connect them, and in particular, we're
8 waiting for -- or we're trying to connect Justice
9 Cuellar and Professor Engstrom at Stanford Law School.

10 I'll begin with just a few introductory remarks
11 before I turn it over to our moderator. This is
12 ACUS's and the Georgetown Law Center's Institute for
13 Technology, Law, and Policies summer symposium on
14 artificial intelligence in federal agencies.

15 Thank you for all -- thank you to all of you, to
16 all of our attendees. We have a lot of people on the
17 phone, many of you with real expertise on our subject.
18 And so we're really happy to have you.

19 For those of you on the phone who are unfamiliar
20 with ACUS, let me just say that ACUS is an independent
21 federal agency within the executive branch that
22 studies and makes recommendations to improve rule-
23 making, adjudication, and other administrative
24 processes.

25 Our symposium this summer will consist of four

1 virtual panels on four separate days. Each panel will
2 be recorded and transcribed, and the recordings and
3 transcriptions will be available at some point on
4 ACUS's website.

5 For today's panel, we have the distinguished
6 authors of a report, soon to be introduced, prepared
7 for and commissioned by ACUS titled "Government by
8 Algorithm: Artificial Intelligence in Federal
9 Administrative Agencies".

10 And before turning it over to our panelists for
11 our moderator, I just want to thank a few people.
12 First and foremost, Hillary Brill -- first -- well,
13 our panelists, but also Hillary Brill, the interim
14 director of the institute at Georgetown. Two ACUS
15 staff members who have done an extraordinary job in
16 organizing this symposium, namely Todd Rogan
17 (phonetic) and Todd Phillips (phonetic). And then the
18 institute itself and in particular Hillary and Jeff
19 Gary (phonetic), its project manager.

20 And with those brief introductory comments, let
21 me turn it over to Hillary, our moderator. Hillary?

22 MS. BRILL: Hello, and thank you for that
23 introduction. As you said, I'm Hillary Brill, and I
24 lead Georgetown's Institute for Technology, Law, and
25 Policy, and it is my privilege to be moderating

1 today's panel with our esteemed panelists and to be
2 part of this symposium cohosted with ACUS.

3 And we are the pilot program of our four-part
4 summer series. So I hope you enjoy it. There will be
5 different series along the way, and as you just heard,
6 you can binge watch the entire series at the end, as
7 well, if you love it so much. So I hope you enjoy it.

8 We had planned at the institute -- had planned
9 to host you on Georgetown Law's campus. As you can
10 see because of current events, we are unfortunately
11 unable to do that. But we are so glad that so many of
12 you have joined us virtually, and as discussed, in so
13 many areas that are important to this issue, you are
14 experts. And we are pleased to have you as part of
15 this conversation.

16 Thank you, ACUS. Thank you for working with the
17 institute on this project to make this symposium
18 possible. And thank you to everyone at the institute
19 who worked on this, including my predecessor, who
20 should be named, Alex Givens (phonetic), who is
21 speaking, I hope, on one of these panels along the
22 way. And she is the one who worked quite a bit on the
23 organization with ACUS. So I want to thank Alex
24 Givens and Jeff Gary for all the work that they put in
25 to making this happen.

1 The institute, it's a think tank at Georgetown
2 Law, where we do original policy work, and we also
3 convene with collaborators, technologists, our
4 faculty, students, and experts like yourselves in
5 cross-disciplinary fields, bringing together
6 technologists and policy makers, and government
7 agencies like today.

8 At the institute, we spend a lot of time thinking
9 about how to train lawyers and policy makers to better
10 understand the way technology impacts our society.
11 Today's collaboration with ACUS is part of that
12 longstanding commitment to studying the impact of AI
13 on society.

14 The institute has hosted in February a symposium
15 on AI and disabilities, previous legislative
16 workshops, and many panel series. But today -- today
17 is about the report that these esteemed panelists have
18 worked so hard in putting together, and it was no easy
19 task. This report is going to highlight the many
20 benefits that there are to using AI systems in
21 government. And it will also explore how agencies
22 truly use AI, a preliminary groundwork discussion that
23 is necessary.

24 These benefits are benefits we want in our
25 personal lives and benefits we want by our government

1 -- decreased costs, greater efficiency, improved
2 quality, and the ability to harness vast amounts of
3 data. These benefits are the reasons why, as the
4 report notes, almost 50 percent of all agencies are
5 using some sort of artificial intelligence.

6 However, today's report also addresses that
7 increases AI adoption comes with increased concerns,
8 especially if the systems are being used by government
9 agencies in decision-making processes and used by our
10 law enforcement.

11 Many AI systems have well-documented racial
12 biases. The software itself is often not necessarily
13 transparent or understandable, sometimes even to its
14 own creators. And remedies, what happens if there is
15 a bias in AI? There often (inaudible) after the fact,
16 and they are erroneous determinations caused by AI,
17 and what do you do after the fact? That may not be
18 sufficient.

19 So this issue of bias inherently is tricky, as
20 bias in AI itself isn't accidental. It's part of its
21 function. The systems are there to make
22 discriminatory decisions. But if we can't determine
23 whether the program is discriminating in a permissible
24 way rather than in an impermissible or frankly illegal
25 way, well, then we need to deeply explore how our

1 government agencies should be using AI.

2 AI in government, as you will hear soon in more
3 detail today, can provide tremendous benefits. But in
4 some contexts, AI raises legal and moral concerns and
5 may implicate due process rights or other civil
6 liberties.

7 So thank you, panelists. We're going to explore
8 these topics in context of their authorship and work
9 on the report, Government by Algorithm: Artificial
10 Intelligence in Federal Administrative Agencies.

11 We are first -- we are going to hear from Justice
12 Cuellar, Supreme Court justice of California and
13 professor at Standard Law, who is an expert in
14 administrative law and legislation in cyber law, and
15 has served in the Clinton and Obama administrations
16 and has taught as a professor at Stanford since 2001.
17 He received his B.A. from Harvard, J.D. from Yale, and
18 Ph.D. from Stanford.

19 Then we will hear from Professional Engstrom from
20 Stanford Law, who is an expert in administrative law,
21 Constitutional law, and legal history.

22 I have to say there's so much more. You need to
23 read their bios. It's just a short summary of the
24 incredible panelists that we have.

25 His current scholarship focuses on the

1 intersection of law and artificial intelligence. He
2 is a faculty affiliate at the Stanford Institute for
3 Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence and the
4 Stanford Center for Legal Informatics, and the
5 Regulations and Evaluation and Governance Lab. He
6 received a J.D. from Stanford, a Master's of Science
7 from Oxford, and a Ph.D. from Yale, and has clerked
8 for Chief Judge Wood on the Seventh Circuit.

9 Professor Ho from Stanford Law is an expert in
10 administrative law, regulatory policy, and
11 antidiscrimination law. He's an associate director
12 for the Stanford's Institute for Human-Centered
13 Artificial Intelligence, and directs the Regulations,
14 Evaluation, and Governance Lab at Stanford. He
15 received his J.D. from Yale, Ph.D. from Harvard, and
16 clerked for Judge Williams on the Appeals Court.

17 And Professor Sharkey. Professor Sharkey from
18 NYU is one of the nation's top authorities on many
19 different issues, including economic laws rule,
20 punitive damages, and federal preemption. She is an
21 appointed public member of our very own ACUS,
22 Administrative Conference of the United States, and an
23 elected member of ALI. She received her Master's of
24 Science from Oxford, J.D. from Yale. She clerked for
25 Judge Calabresi of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the

1 Second Circuit and Justice Souter.

2 So we are very fortunate to have you here today.
3 With that, we'll proceed with the presentation by each
4 author of the report and the discussions of some of
5 your process and findings, of course, within the
6 short, limited time that we have. We will go into
7 more detail as the panels -- as the series progresses.
8 But today is a true table setting of these issues.

9 So if we can begin, I'd like to start with
10 Justice Cuellar.

11 JUSTICE CUELLAR: Hello, can you hear me?

12 MS. BRILL: Yes.

13 JUSTICE CUELLAR: Oh terrific. Thank you. It's
14 been a little bit more challenging to get my kids to
15 stop using their cellphones. Thank you, Hillary, for
16 that terrific introduction, and thank you to ACUS for
17 supporting this project. You are going to hear more
18 from my colleagues about what we learned. I want to
19 give a little bit of context for why, in some ways,
20 this report was 64 years in the making.

21 So yesterday Wayne County prosecutor Kim Worthy,
22 probably many of you know, admitted that a faulty
23 facial recognition identification was responsible for
24 a suspect's erroneous 30-hour detention and
25 interrogation.

1 And stories like this make it pretty easy to see
2 why the public is getting interested in how government
3 uses this mix of analytical techniques in computing
4 systems capable of learning that go under the heading
5 of AI.

6 But I want to just take four minutes to start
7 earlier in 1956. It's a humid New Hampshire summer,
8 and several scholars are organizing a workshop on a
9 topic they just decided to call artificial
10 intelligence. This motley crew is led by the quirky
11 mathematician John McCarthy but also includes
12 logicians, electrical engineers, cognitive scientists,
13 shockingly enough, no lawyers. And they waste little
14 time in sketching out an agenda that summer that is
15 just striking to look at, the topics they were
16 discussing, because some of the very words they used
17 to describe their scope of discussion could be taken
18 out of the report that we have just been working on
19 and released 64 years later.

20 Building knowledge bases for digital computers,
21 natural language processing, computer vision, and even
22 neural networks. They're all men and confident enough
23 to expect very rapid progress in the ensuing years.

24 Four years later, Senator John F. Kennedy loses
25 New Hampshire but wins the presidency, and the

1 arrestable and brilliant James Landis, scholar of
2 administrative law, probably known to many of you,
3 writes a report emphasizing to the President Elect the
4 crucial role of administrative agencies. So he was
5 talking about the tricky balance between political
6 responsiveness and agency insulation, the value of
7 government-wide efforts to make them work better, and
8 that effort eventually culminates in the establishment
9 of ACUS, which began operations in 1968.

10 It's fair to say that in the ensuing decades, at
11 least some of the projects that Landis sketched out in
12 his transition report to John F. Kennedy got more
13 traction and moved more quickly than the agenda that
14 John McCarthy and his colleagues sketched out at
15 Dartmouth, which tended to be much more technically
16 daunting than they expected.

17 But things began to change in stages. On the
18 national security front, research never abated on AI
19 and produced important changes in areas like avionics
20 and even RAND Corporation advised geopolitical
21 strategy. And a few years later, of course, the
22 internet plus cheaper computing power brought massive
23 disruption, and the rest is history.

24 So this rising interest in AI in the private
25 sector in its current incarnation naturally triggered

1 among a lot of us pretty intense questions about
2 essentially the intersection of the legacy of this
3 Dartmouth workshop and the concerns that Landis spent
4 most of his life on like what can we delegate to AI.
5 How can we comply with law in an AI-spiked world? How
6 do we stress test AI technology to detect its hidden
7 biases so we can avoid what just happened in Wayne
8 County? How can society change its civic institutions
9 to use algorithms in a more efficient way to write
10 rules, to adjudicate? And how, given that change, can
11 we define more stable goals against which to measure
12 change?

13 And let's be clear. These questions are
14 obviously relevant not only to the federal government,
15 but speaking of Wayne County, to states and localities
16 that spend more than 80 percent of all government
17 dollars, leaving aside entitlements, debt service, and
18 defense.

19 All this is heady stuff, but the four of us
20 almost simultaneously ran into a problem that ACUS
21 helped us turn into an opportunity. It was hard to
22 engage with these questions thoughtfully when we
23 didn't even have a basic working knowledge of how much
24 AI was being used by agencies around the country.

25 So with the help of ACUS and with colleagues that

1 I just have delighted in working with at every turn,
2 we set out to pursue a project focused on getting a
3 baseline picture of how AI use was playing out in
4 government agencies, beginning with the federal
5 government. We recruited some superb students from
6 Stanford and NYU to work with us. We did our best to
7 survey available testimony, press coverage, agency
8 disclosures. We put to one side national security
9 agencies for others to work on in the future, and we
10 delved more deeply into particular agencies and issues
11 benefitting enormously from the wisdom of federal
12 officials at a vast range of agencies, maybe some of
13 you are on this webinar.

14 And since the goal wasn't just to chronicle what
15 agencies told us but to analyze the composite picture
16 that emerged, we have the beginnings of this -- in
17 this report of a taxonomy of concepts and ideas, the
18 structure and agenda of reform, and a research that
19 will last for some time, maybe for another 64 years.

20 I think it's fair to say that AI use is already
21 extensive and varied in federal agencies and will
22 become more so, and as you're going to hear from David
23 and then Dan and then Cathy, even the current picture
24 offers its share of striking surprises.

25 But the bottom line that I want you to remember

1 is that this report was in some ways 64 years in the
2 making. Thank you, Hillary.

3 MS. BRILL: You're welcome. You're welcome.
4 Thank you. And that was a great history lesson and
5 true table setting. And I appreciate it. It was a
6 great story and narrative to set -- set the stage for
7 the rest of you.

8 Professor Engstrom.

9 PROFESSOR ENGSTROM: Sure, thank you. So I'll
10 start by echoing Tio's (phonetic) thanks to ACUS.
11 ACUS was absolutely tremendous in supporting this
12 project from the start, and that ran from Matt Weiner
13 at the top all the way -- all the way down. So thank
14 you. We couldn't have produced a report that we're as
15 proud of without your support throughout.

16 (Inaudible) quite a few agency officials on
17 staff, perhaps, in the audience today. So this may be
18 my best chance to thank them and to say that, you
19 know, many of you are unsung in the report. We don't
20 cite you by name. Agencies didn't want us to. But we
21 couldn't have produced a report that was quite as rich
22 as it was without your help. So thank you.

23 All right, I'm going to talk about enforcement.
24 That was the part of the report where I ran point, and
25 I don't have to explain to you that enforcement is a

1 critical part of governance. If you have too little
2 of it, then there's probably costly lawbreaking going
3 on out in the world. But going after the wrong people
4 is also costly, and it's unfair.

5 And so several agencies within the federal
6 administered state have begun using machine learning
7 to support enforcement decisions. And the report --
8 part 2 of the report is where the really rich case
9 studies are, and in that part of the report, we
10 profiled two tools, in particular, at the SEC that the
11 SEC has fully implemented and is using.

12 One of those tools examines transaction data. So
13 how do we structure data, numbers, to catch insider
14 trading? Another tool used at the SEC parses the
15 narrative disclosures of investment advisors. So
16 these are registrants. People have to register with
17 the SEC in order to do what they do, and this is very
18 unstructured data. These are just paragraphs of text,
19 and the SEC is using a machine learning tool to
20 predict which among those investment advisors might be
21 the bad apples, might be violating the federal
22 securities laws.

23 There are plenty of other agencies that are
24 developing or deploying machine learning in the
25 enforcement space. The SEC, by no means, exhausts the

1 set. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
2 is using some machine learning to catch healthcare
3 fraud. The EPA is developing some tools that will
4 predict Clean Water Act violations. The IRS is
5 applying some ML in the tax fraud context.

6 There's also interesting stuff at the state
7 level, and we assume that lots more of this is going
8 to come online as machine learning continues to
9 proliferate throughout the federal government and is
10 joined up to the mountains of data on which many
11 agencies sit.

12 So going forward, I think there are three kinds
13 of work to be done. I'm expanding on what we've
14 already done in the report. One is to continue to
15 surface use cases, to slice and dice them, to
16 understand their different dimensions. And I've
17 started in on some of this in some of the follow-on
18 work that I've done.

19 Obviously, all of these enforcement tools are
20 united by this common focus on shrinking the haystack
21 of a pool of violators. So you can think of these
22 systems as recommender systems. They're not fully
23 automated. They don't fully displace agency
24 discretion. Rather, they help agencies decide where
25 to allocate their scarce enforcement resources.

1 But beyond this, if you look across the tools,
2 they're very much a varied lot. They differ in their
3 sophistication. They range from logical, rule-based
4 AI to some fairly sophisticated forms of machine
5 learning. They differ in the types of predictions
6 that they make. They differ in their sourcing,
7 whether they were developed in-house by agency
8 technologists or whether they were acquired through
9 the procurement process.

10 And we think that one of the great contributions
11 of the report is to bring to light some of these
12 technical and operational details because as we think
13 about how we might want to regulate this, how we might
14 want to try to build an accountability structure
15 around these tools, those details are really going to
16 matter.

17 I have a skinny five minutes. I don't even know
18 how much I have left, but let me just say two more
19 things by way of placeholder that might inject some
20 ideas into the conversation that's going to follow
21 these short little presentations.

22 So I think two fairly good things to think about
23 as we think about enforcement tools and algorithmic
24 enforcement tools, in particular, one is how these
25 tools are going to reshape the internal agency

1 structure and operation. And then another important
2 question is how these tools are going to press on
3 doctrine and force us to think about agency
4 accountability in new ways.

5 So on the first of those, I'm doing some writing
6 here, and the way I like to think about it is that
7 these tools are going to shift the citing of
8 discretion within agencies. And one nice way of
9 thinking about is that these tools, as they become
10 more and more pervasive within administrative
11 agencies, they're going to push discretion up, over,
12 and out.

13 So up, they're going to increase the managerial
14 control of the managers over the more dispersed line
15 level enforcement staff. Over, they're going to shift
16 discretion to technologists. One way of thinking
17 about administrative laws, it's an effort to allocate
18 power within different types of agency stakeholders,
19 among different types of agency stakeholders. So
20 think lawyers, scientists, the political appointees of
21 the top of an agency. And I think these tools are
22 going to add technologists to that mix and some
23 discretion is, therefore, going to be lodged in the
24 technologists who will have control over the coding of
25 the algorithms.

1 Second really important thing to think about is
2 how we can build an accountability structure around
3 these. The lawyers in the audience know that for a
4 long time, administered law has hived off enforcement
5 decision making from judicial review. Part of that is
6 that we don't trust generalist judges to second guess
7 agencies, especially around budgetary matters. But
8 part of it, too, is that we don't think we can really
9 reconstruct individual enforcement decisions well
10 enough to permit judicial review.

11 And so here's an example where the advent or the
12 increasing uptake of these tools could really press on
13 doctrine in significant ways. And we might want to
14 rethink, for instance, that hiving off of enforcement
15 decision making from judicial review.

16 So that's all I'll say. Those are mostly just
17 placeholders. I'll assume we'll come to the question
18 of judicial review and accountability later on. I'll
19 assume we'll come back to thinking about how this is
20 going to alter the internal operation of agencies
21 across different types of governance tasks. But
22 hopefully that's a helpful injection of at least a
23 couple of ideas into our conversation.

24 MS. BRILL: Thank you, Professor Engstrom. Now,
25 Professor Ho, would you please discuss some of your

1 issues from your part of the report?

2 PROFESSOR HO: Great. Thanks, Hillary. And I
3 want to thank Georgetown and academic, Matt and Todd,
4 in particular, for facilitating all this. David
5 already thanked the many agency officials who
6 participated in the research for this report.

7 The other really important element of all of this
8 was the way in which we brought 30 law and computer
9 scientists, students from Stanford and NYU together,
10 to really wrap their heads around these issues and
11 really peek underneath the hood of what kinds of ML
12 techniques were being deployed. So a big thanks goes
13 out to our students, as well.

14 I've been asked to just say a couple of opening
15 remarks around how AI is being used in agency
16 adjudication. Before I turn to two of those examples,
17 I just want to highlight one of the first parts of the
18 report, which is that with these students, we looked
19 at the top 140 agencies by FTEs, really to get a
20 rigorous sense of the extent to which agencies were
21 deploying AI. And two basic findings from that canvas
22 were that out of these 140 agencies, nearly half had
23 really given serious consideration of the use of AI
24 and machine learning.

25 That said, when the computer scientists started

1 to look underneath the hood to really ascertain the
2 level of sophistication, I think it was quite varied,
3 and there was only about 12 percent of the use cases
4 that were rated particularly high. Many were simply
5 providing insufficient detail to really come up with a
6 rigorous understanding of the level of sophistication.
7 So there is yet a fair amount of work to be done on
8 that front.

9 Let me speak briefly about two examples of
10 innovation for mass adjudication. The first is in the
11 Social Security Administration. As ACUS knows better
12 than most agencies, ensuring the accuracy and
13 consistency of mass adjudication is a major challenge
14 for the administrative state.

15 So we've known for decades and decades that there
16 can be a disturbing amount of arbitrariness in the
17 grant rates when judges within an office are randomly
18 assigned to cases where grant rates, for instance, for
19 Social Security Disability can vary from as low as 8
20 percent for one judge to 98 percent to another judge,
21 leading some to decry this as a form of disability
22 roulette.

23 And due process, that is the kind of
24 constitutional underpinning for mass adjudication, is
25 resource-intensive. It can take years at the Board of

1 Veterans Appeals, upwards of seven years for an appeal
2 to actually be resolved from the time that it is
3 filed. So there is tremendous -- there are tremendous
4 gains here, potentially, for using AI, and the story
5 of innovation in this space really comes from the
6 Social Security Administration's appeals council,
7 where the head of the appeal council, Gerald Ray, was
8 really creative in prototyping potential solutions to
9 overcome IT hiring rules. Judge Ray started to
10 identify lawyers who also could code and bring the
11 kind of structured information in to develop tools
12 like predictive tool of the kinds of cases that were
13 likely to be easy grants, therefore allowing the
14 agency to skip hearings and make early grant
15 determinations.

16 And perhaps the most innovative tool here is one
17 that uses natural language processing to catch errors
18 in draft decisions. So for instance, it will parse
19 the draft language by an administrative law judge and
20 then look at the functional impairment that's
21 identified in the set of facts and compare that
22 against a kind of table of job classifications to flag
23 potential internal inconsistencies in the decision so
24 that judges can go and review those draft decisions.

25 That's an extraordinary story of innovation

1 within government. But there are also two kind of
2 ways in which it connects to core tenets of
3 administrative law, much in the way that Professor
4 Engstrom sort of alluded to.

5 One is that for the better part of the modern due
6 process jurisprudence, we focused on accuracy, at
7 least since Matthews versus Eldridge. And one
8 question there is if you're (inaudible) hearings
9 whether that might lead us to at least reconsider the
10 kind of dignity prong of due process. At least we
11 have anecdotal evidence of litigants who come in and
12 report really knowing they're going to lose the case
13 but finding real value in simply being heard.

14 And it's possible that by easing the burden of
15 processing these kinds of cases that AI could actually
16 recover that kind of lost constitutional value.

17 And the other one alluded to also by Professor
18 Engstrom is about the internal allocation of
19 authority. ACUS has thought a lot about the
20 decisional independence of administrative law judges,
21 and the adoption of something like the inside tool
22 tends to be higher amongst staff attorneys. And so
23 there's a question there about the internal allocation
24 of decisional authority within the agency.

25 Second use case I'll just highlight briefly is an

1 example of informal adjudication in the U.S. Patent
2 and Trademark Office, which is also no stranger to
3 backlogs with 9,000 patent examiners. And the PTO has
4 been prototyping methods to improve the classification
5 and search of trademarks and patents. So the idea is
6 the most time-consuming part for any patent examiner
7 is identifying relevant prior art. And if you can
8 build better search methods to reduce that search
9 cost, that could help cut down the backlog of the
10 agency.

11 On the trademark side, one of the most innovative
12 tools is actually a computer vision model that allows
13 trademark examiners to take a trademark sort of
14 application and see whether there are visually similar
15 prior registered marks based on a kind of computer
16 vision algorithm.

17 Two last points just on that example is that I do
18 think there are really important governance questions
19 as the prior speakers have alluded to. One point here
20 is that we've learned from the computer vision
21 literature in the past few years there are lots of
22 opportunities for adversarial learning, meaning gaming
23 of brittle computer algorithms. And so if trademark
24 examiners no longer actually themselves inspect
25 visually similar marks, it's possible for

1 sophisticated parties potentially to game the
2 trademark registration process if they know what kind
3 of computer vision algorithm is built out. And that
4 raises some serious questions about accountability and
5 fairness with sophisticated parties are better
6 positioned to fool trademark examiners.

7 And then the last thing that our -- the last
8 point I'll make here is that this PTO case study
9 highlights one of the tricky dimensions in terms of
10 the role of contractors in building out AI solutions.
11 About a third of the use cases we uncovered were
12 developed by outside contractors. And oftentimes
13 those use cases can be locked behind proprietary
14 source code. But in the PTO case, there was an even
15 more sort of apparent potential conflict of interest
16 where the very contractor that was -- had built out a
17 natural language processing-based engine to classify
18 patents for assignment to different art units was also
19 advertising selling the ability for patent applicants
20 to be able to write their patents in a way to gain
21 particular arguments.

22 So I think there are real kind of governance
23 issues that need to be tackled in this space to make
24 sure that AI is not abused in particular ways.

25 MS. BRILL: Thank you. And Professor Sharkey.

1 PROFESSOR SHARKEY: Thank you. So I want to
2 thank Georgetown and Hillary, as well, and also give a
3 shout out to Alexandra Givens. A decade and a half
4 ago, she was one of my very first students, law
5 students, and teaching assistants, and was phenomenal
6 in that role. It was wonderful to reconnect through
7 this work.

8 The second is, again, to thank ACUS. Just to be
9 clear, ACUS is sort of like a hallmark of ACUS that
10 they engage with academics and have us serve as
11 consultants but then also serve as kind of a calling
12 card to get input from a variety of different federal
13 agencies and officials. And it's enormously helpful
14 and productive, these kind of partnerships that they
15 enable.

16 My -- I have a history with ACUS. As Hillary, as
17 you mentioned, I'm an elected member but also back in,
18 I think, 2010 when Paul Verkuil resurrected ACUS as
19 its first head, I started as a consultant on a
20 different project in which I also enormously
21 benefitted from interviewing federal official, agency
22 folks, many of whom might be on the call, and then
23 under Matt's leadership was really honored to
24 participate in this endeavor.

25 Final prefatory remark is just in some ways, I

1 think our project was unique, drawing together not
2 only, you know, academics from different institutions,
3 Stanford and NYU, also drawing in expertise from
4 Justice Cuellar from the California State Supreme
5 Court, but the students that we gathered were both
6 lawyers and technical, computer science folks. And in
7 a way, I think our project is kind of like a microcosm
8 of what's needed and what distinguishes this from the
9 earlier Dartmouth project, you know, that you
10 mentioned because it brings together both legal
11 expertise, policy input, along with technical savvy
12 kind of at the outset of thinking about some of these
13 problems.

14 And just a smaller footnote, it includes women as
15 well as men. Female students, we have some female
16 collaboration. I've been in contact (inaudible)
17 reporters who say, oh, are there women interested in
18 machine learning and artificial intelligence, and the
19 future is bright if we look at (inaudible) students in
20 this project.

21 But a few remarks from my perspective, I want to
22 think about some of the findings that surfaced in the
23 report with respect to the Food and Drug
24 Administration as a kind of window onto the future of
25 AI in regulatory analysis. And by regulatory

1 analysis, we include standard setting, guidance
2 documents, and ultimately, rule-making.

3 And interestingly, the FDA is a great exemplar or
4 lens into some of these issues because most people
5 know that the future of healthcare, in particular, is
6 going to be increasingly mediated by machines, by
7 machine learning, by AI technologies.

8 And the other thing is that AI tools are
9 extremely data hungry. This is sort of a theme that
10 emerges throughout our report. And it's important to
11 note that the FDA, which is the world's leading drug
12 regulator, sits on an extremely large repository of
13 data from clinical trials. And so the potential of
14 being able to harness enormous datasets using these
15 kinds of AI tools is really mindboggling.

16 There's also not only this existing data reserve
17 but lots of emerging sources of data with respect to
18 electronic health records, with respect to wearable
19 technologies, and the like.

20 And so there are two main points that I want to
21 bring out into our discussion. The first relates to
22 something that Professor Engstrom foreshadowed, which
23 is the way in which AI and machine learning might be
24 actually quite transformative with respect to an
25 agency's mission.

1 So the FDA is a great example of this. And from
2 my perspective, at least, what this does, the machine
3 learning and AI kind of fuels a transformative shift
4 in the regulatory paradigm from being primarily a pre-
5 market and a clearance for drugs and medical devices,
6 shifting much more into the post-market surveillance.
7 And that's going to harness using machine learning and
8 AI with respect to dramatically improved ways to
9 collect real world data and analyzing it kind of an
10 ongoing basis.

11 But our report kind of uncovered with respect to
12 the FDA there is that the FDA is kind of at a
13 crossroads. On the one hand, they can go down an
14 avenue of further refining existing AI tools,
15 including primarily natural language processing.
16 They've been using some pilots that look remarkably
17 similar to what David was mentioning with respect to
18 the SEC, namely using natural language (inaudible)
19 processing to kind of sift through adverse event
20 reports and try to figure out which ones deserve the
21 agency's priorities and the like.

22 The second avenue and maybe a very, very
23 promising one that the FDA is really thinking about is
24 collecting more structured or focused data and the
25 ways in which they can go directly to sources, some of

1 which I mentioned at the outset with respect to this
2 real world data.

3 Second, very briefly, a point that I want to
4 bring out is the relationship to this idea of building
5 internal capacity. I think the FDA, to me at least,
6 provided some really interesting, surprising examples
7 -- I'll mention one -- about the kinds of internal
8 embedded expertise that's being developed.

9 And internal, what they call, incubator of
10 machine learning, AI technology is called INFORMED at
11 the FDA. It stands for Information Exchange and Data
12 Transformation Initiative.

13 It was described to us, and we interviewed
14 various federal officials who are involved with this
15 as a regulatory sandbox. It's basically an internal
16 incubator within the FDA of some of these machine
17 learning AI tools.

18 And so to me what stood out is this is a way that
19 an agency like the FDA can "fail cheaply". Right?
20 The FDA is otherwise kind of an agency that would have
21 a low-risk tolerance. Their decisions are life and
22 death decisions. So you -- the margin for error there
23 is pretty small. But having this internal incubator,
24 they can try to kind of have exploration of some of
25 these tools.

1 And the second and final point I'll make is that
2 the FDA is an interesting agency because they not only
3 are going to be using these technologies internally,
4 they regulate AI out in the real world. So they have
5 been approving medical devices, for example, that use
6 machine learning/AI technologies. And so there's a
7 way in which they have this internal incubator, and
8 they are publishing their findings from the deployment
9 of some of these technologies. They can search "e-
10 risk" (phonetic) certain machine learning/AI tools
11 that the private sector then can have more confidence
12 as they go about using them. Thank you.

13 MS. BRILL: Thank you. Thank you so much to all
14 of our panelists. And many of you mentioned all of
15 the different people who participated in the report
16 and the important collaboration between technologists
17 and lawyers. And that has always been at the core,
18 also, of what the institute is trying to do to bring
19 technologists and lawyers together, and we are really
20 pleased to see a report like this come from such
21 collaboration.

22 You also mentioned a variety of things about
23 accountability. You mentioned relationship building
24 and internal capacity, Professor Sharkey. Surprising
25 examples of AI in different government, a lot of

1 benefits in AI because we focus on concerns of AI, but
2 there really are benefits to be recognized here, and
3 discussion of gamesmanship and how do we handle third-
4 party vendors.

5 We're going to discuss some of these in the time
6 that we have and then have some questions from the
7 audience. I want to first address bias, bias in AI,
8 we know that that's a concern, and the report notes it
9 as well. And racial bias, especially, is a concern
10 with the problem of artificial intelligence and
11 machine learning systems. This is true across the
12 board, no matter what the systems are designed to do.

13 You note in your report that bias can come from a
14 variety of different factors. It can come from
15 whether the human coders -- themselves
16 unintentionally, it could come from unrepresented
17 data, linking datasets that might not otherwise be
18 connected, or other sources.

19 But what I want to ask you on a preliminary basis
20 is what are some of the use cases where the potential
21 for bias that you guys learned about in your research
22 that the potential for bias concerns you the most.
23 And who wants to start?

24 JUSTICE CUELLAR: I'm happy to start. I will
25 just tell you that obviously, bias is a huge problem.

1 But I will -- and then I'll give you one context where
2 the team that I was working with, they certainly
3 raised concerns about it, and then I'll just highlight
4 one of the difficulties in talking about bias in the
5 AI context.

6 So we looked at some published reports and
7 testimony highlighting how agencies that do border-
8 related enforcement use facial -- or beginning to use
9 facial recognition. And this is an area, of course,
10 where not surprisingly, the full extent of what is
11 currently happening is sort of probably well beyond
12 what we were able to wrap our minds around.

13 But there was enough that we could get a sense of
14 that highlighted some of the very -- Professor
15 Engstrom, for example, was talking about where the
16 shift of discretion out includes the extent to which
17 an agency purchases a set of software that reflects an
18 architecture for thinking about visual data and
19 working through visual data that may have
20 probabilities of failure modes, even in the absence of
21 any adversarial effort to make that happen.

22 So when the Wayne County stuff was reported, I
23 was not surprised. I would say there's no question
24 that there are probably some contexts where processing
25 of visual data can be useful to an agency and probably

1 advance social welfare. But we have to be pretty
2 careful.

3 Now, let me highlight one way in which the whole
4 discussion of bias gets really tricky. There are
5 going to be a lot of situations, and facial
6 recognition will be one example where you can look for
7 bias around race and around gender, where the
8 definition of bias is pretty clear.

9 But then there are other contexts where the
10 trade-offs are really about values, and one person's
11 bias is another person's legitimate decision to
12 prioritize one outcome over another.

13 So if you think about the choices that state
14 regulators and NHTSA and the private sector will have
15 around self-driving vehicles and the trolley problem-
16 like choices that have to be made about where you put
17 the risk, I think that we have to acknowledge that
18 there are some blurry areas where questions that are
19 partly technical, partly policy responsiveness
20 questions are also, in some sense, at risk of
21 triggering concerns about bias, given questions of
22 who's in the room when the decision making happens, so
23 to speak.

24 PROFESSOR HO: Yeah, I'm happy to follow on that.
25 I think Justice Cuellar is right to kind of point to

1 the use case around facial recognition technology. We
2 have a kind of in-depth case study of the Customs and
3 Border Patrol Agency, where there were significant
4 errors, and it was really hard for the agency even to
5 ascertain what the source of errors were because the
6 system that had been built up was proprietary.

7 And we have a pretty substantial evidence base
8 that documents the potential for bias in facial
9 recognition technology. And the National Institute of
10 Standards and Technology itself has done really
11 terrific work on performance benchmarking of facial
12 recognition technology that also corroborates the fact
13 that across some 47 vendors, there are really
14 significant performance differences in terms of the
15 accuracy of FRT when applied to minority groups. So
16 that is an area of real concern.

17 Let me say two other things. One is that the
18 scope of the report focused more on the civil side of
19 things, specifically carved out sort of national
20 security and military applications, which are also
21 some of the areas of greatest concern. And so,
22 Hillary, when your question, what are the things
23 things that concern you the most, in a sense, we have
24 to be careful here about most -- you know, given that
25 it was covered within the report, given we excluded

1 sort of military and national security things, just
2 because we realized it was going to be very
3 challenging to gain any sort of transparent insight
4 into a number of those applications.

5 But the kind of thing generally that you worry
6 about that I think also connects to the civil
7 enforcement side is what we now have seen in terms of
8 the performance of predictive policing algorithms. So
9 there's a great paper by a set of machine learners
10 that basically shows that if you target and allocate
11 police officers based upon arrests and then feed
12 arrest data back into the model and refine it in that
13 particular way, you could send police over to the
14 exact same zip code over and over and over again in a
15 kind of runaway feedback loop, even if the underlying
16 crime rates were random.

17 So that is a really important thing for agencies
18 to get right. And there is actually some important
19 work to be done in terms of how to properly build in
20 information as it comes in so that enforcement
21 algorithms don't result in that kind of a runaway
22 feedback loop.

23 The second thing I'll just say is that as
24 Professor Engstrom had alluded to, there are really
25 important doctrinal implications here. On the one

1 hand, a lot of anti-discrimination law has shifted
2 towards sort of anti-classification as an undergirding
3 principle. And what we know from the past decade of
4 work in fairness, accountability, and transparency in
5 machine learning is that blinding yourself to features
6 like race and gender are really imperfect ways to
7 account for the potential disparate impact of
8 algorithms.

9 And so I think we're on a kind of collision
10 course between anti-classification and what is known
11 in the fairness in machine learning literature, which
12 is that the way in which we understand and address
13 bias is by developing formal algorithms that really
14 build in these kind of fairness constraints that rely
15 on having measures for protected attributes to really
16 build in the appropriate safeguards.

17 PROFESSOR SHARKEY: Just a quick word, too,
18 because, Hillary, you know, as you alluded to in your
19 question we could -- bias, typically, I think, people
20 put in the front of their minds these issues about
21 disparate impact on various races, genders, et cetera.
22 There's an optimistic story about the infusion of
23 machine learning and AI with respect to bias, too, and
24 the FDA story kind of captures part of that, which is
25 that this is all about data, data, data, and how

1 representative the data is.

2 And so for example, if we're worried that present
3 clinical trial data is rather unrepresentative, so it
4 doesn't include data on all groups in society, et
5 cetera, to the extent that these machine learning/AI
6 tools allows us to harness lots more real world
7 evidence coming from all sorts of different groups, et
8 cetera, and seeing how things play out, that could
9 lead to, you know, a de-biasing in a way that people
10 don't typically think about sometimes because they
11 don't raise anti-discrimination type issues.

12 PROFESSOR ENGSTROM: So let me just -- let me say
13 a couple of very brief things, and I'll loop back to
14 some things that I talked about in my introductory
15 remarks. I think here's one of the places where
16 really taking apart these tools and understanding
17 their technical and operational details can matter.
18 So think about the two SEC tools that I told you about
19 in my -- in my five minutes.

20 One of those looks at conduct that's already been
21 engaged in. If you think of that as like a reactive
22 tool, this is the insider trading tool. You're
23 looking at transactions already completed.

24 The other tool, though, is more of a -- you can
25 call it a preemptive tool. You're trying to build a

1 profile of a likely violator of the law, and that's
2 like a really important distinction if you think about
3 it when we think about age discrimination and bias
4 type concerns. A reactive approach where we have
5 perfect transparency over the equities markets holds
6 the promise of perfect enforcement and perfectly
7 nondiscriminatory enforcement, if we can capture every
8 instance of wrongdoing.

9 But the preemptive approach, where we're building
10 a profile, is essentially a kind of profile. And so
11 there's much potential there for discrimination. So
12 that's the first plug I'll make as to the usefulness
13 of our report in really trying to get under the hood
14 of some of these tools.

15 The other thing -- and I'll go back to from my
16 introductory remarks -- is this is another place where
17 algorithms really press on doctrine when you think
18 about these enforcement tools. They are mostly hived
19 off from judicial review. Prosecutorial discretion is
20 really important. The Armstrong case -- this is an
21 equal protection case -- says that we don't permit
22 selective prosecution claims unless there's a really
23 strong evidentiary showing of both discriminatory
24 intent and effect, and that's a really hard case to
25 make out to even get review of these things.

1 So what you worry about in the enforcement
2 context is that because (inaudible) in such
3 substantial ways that there's a slow burn of
4 discrimination that can go on.

5 Now, the use of algorithmic tools like criminal
6 risk assessment at the state level, those have already
7 been the subject of litigation. It's likely we're
8 going to get a Supreme Court case on that. There will
9 be guardrails built around those. You might not agree
10 with what those guardrails are, but there will be
11 guardrails built around those particular tools.

12 But I guess I worry more about that slow burn of
13 bias, then, that can make its way into some of the
14 data analytics that a lot of similar regulatory
15 agencies are using, and they won't be reachable under
16 current doctrine.

17 MS. BRILL: Thank you, all, for -- oh wait, did
18 you have something else you wanted to say, Professor
19 Ho? I didn't want to interrupt you.

20 There are a variety of different themes that came
21 up with how to -- how should we potentially deal with
22 the issue of bias. In addition to just finding bias,
23 but how do we deal with the issue of bias. And one
24 discussion that you mentioned was, you know, we have
25 to first define what bias is, Justice Cuellar, and

1 that's -- that also brings up a whole variety of
2 issues of what are standard settings on trying to stop
3 bias, and who makes those decisions, and is it the
4 government, or is it the person creating the actual
5 software, and is that a private entity?

6 I'm not asking you answer that question, although
7 I would love it, but we don't have enough time. I
8 want to move on to -- because they were getting ready
9 to answer, and I wanted to move on, actually, to the
10 question of transparency, frankly, as a possible
11 mechanism for some oversight because oversight was
12 mentioned by several of you, as well, as something
13 that should be taken into account in artificial
14 intelligence.

15 In fact, in the report, one recommendation was
16 setting up an AI oversight board, for example. But
17 many agencies, as you know, are using AI, frankly,
18 built by the private sector. And I believe it was
19 you, Professor Ho, who was talking about this concern
20 of accountability and transparency with actual third-
21 party vendors. Some people are calling it Black Box
22 AI. Or whatever way you want to describe it, which
23 can significantly limit the way that we can see how
24 those systems are being used due to trade secrets, if
25 it's a third party, or other types of IP protections.

1 So what -- it's so complex now. It's not easy to
2 explain how these artificial intelligence systems
3 work, particularly when there's someone outside of the
4 government who is making it. So if we can't have
5 transparency, what do we do? What do we do for
6 accountability? Should we not have third-party
7 vendors? Should we ban these "Black Box AI"? What
8 paths do you see, in general, to increase transparency
9 and the challenges with increasing transparency?

10 JUSTICE CUELLAR: I know you're trying to
11 deliberately be proactive when you say if we can't
12 have transparency do we ban all contractors. Like, I
13 would say, no, we don't ban all contracting, and I
14 wouldn't give up entirely on transparency. I know my
15 colleagues have a lot to say about this.

16 But let me just frame it by saying one thing
17 about why we ought not to expect too much for
18 transparency. I think a fair read of our report is
19 that you don't really get an insight into how AI is
20 going to perform in government if you just look at the
21 algorithm or the math behind the algorithm. It's at
22 least a function of what is the algorithm, what data
23 will the algorithm use, what is the reliability of the
24 computing system and network that the algorithm and
25 the data are being processed in, how does the user

1 interface work to present data and recommendations to
2 the user, and how does the organization perform.

3 So all that is to say that really this discussion
4 has to be about benchmarking at least as much as it is
5 about transparency. And there are going to be some
6 situations where an agency can and will make a
7 compelling argument, certainly one that could present
8 a court, I would imagine under the appropriate
9 statutes, that it has a good reason not to share every
10 single thing about how it's working with AI with the
11 public for enforcement-related reasons. But do we
12 need more transparency? For sure. We just can't
13 expect that will solve every problem.

14 PROFESSOR HO: Yeah, one thing that the report
15 highlights that became really clear to us in talking
16 to a range of the agency officials is how important
17 what we refer to in the report as internal due process
18 is in terms of at least the agency having enough of an
19 understanding as to how a tool is really performing.

20 So that, to go back to the SSA example, was the
21 brilliance of actually having a person like Kirk Lays
22 (phonetic) who was both a lawyer and someone who can
23 do forms of natural language processing really build
24 the system out, and it was that internal capacity that
25 really enabled him to scope out what is a problem

1 worth solving. And I think a quote from him -- "I
2 developed the flags I wanted to have available as an
3 adjudicator". And that is one of the kind of
4 challenges when delegating something out to a
5 contractor.

6 And I think at least, as Justice Cuellar said, in
7 the enforcement context, there may be reasons not to
8 have the decision system be completely transparent.
9 The IRS, for instance, in its audit selection system
10 guards very carefully how it selects because you would
11 really be worried about reverse engineering if
12 everyone knew exactly how audits were selected by the
13 IRS. But what's very important is that the agency
14 itself, the domain experts, have a really clear
15 understanding.

16 And Professor Engstrom may be able to give us a
17 little bit more insight into that dynamic at the SEC,
18 where it was very much the sort of lawyers who were
19 demanding greater transparency and intelligibility of
20 the risks for selecting cases.

21 PROFESSOR ENGSTROM: Yeah, I can speak to that
22 briefly, which is as we talked to the SEC officials
23 and staff who put into place some of the algorithmic
24 enforcement tools being used within the agency, they
25 noted -- so take that second tool that I profiled, the

1 one that tries to figure out which investment advisors
2 might be the bad apples.

3 So these are predictions that are generated in
4 some central part of the agency by technologists. And
5 then those outputs are then handed off to line level
6 enforcers. And what we heard from the officials and
7 staff as we talked to them about the implementation of
8 this tool is that those line level enforcers are not
9 at all impressed by being told that, hey, this fancy
10 machine learning system threw a flag as to this
11 investment advisor but not this one, you know, but not
12 that one.

13 They want to know why. They want to know, you
14 know, why the flag was thrown. They want to know
15 which part of the narrative disclosure threw the flag.
16 And so this gave us at least some reason for optimism
17 that the different -- that the splitting off of, say,
18 the technologists and those line level enforcers in
19 the agency actually creates its own internal form of
20 due process and demands for explanation.

21 MS. BRILL: Would you like to add anything,
22 Professor Sharkey? I also -- I also wanted to say to
23 the audience that you can provide questions. We're
24 open to a question-and-answer session, so please do
25 provide your questions. But Professor Sharkey?

1 PROFESSOR SHARKEY: Yeah, just very briefly. So
2 first, I'll defer, of course, to Justice Cuellar about
3 what kind of arguments judges would find persuasive on
4 judicial review with respect to transparency or not --

5 JUSTICE CUELLAR: I was talking about
6 hypothetical judges.

7 PROFESSOR SHARKEY: Right, right.

8 JUSTICE CUELLAR: And hypothetical courts.

9 PROFESSOR SHARKEY: Mysterious point, though,
10 comes back to what I said earlier about our project
11 being in some sense this microcosm. I think that what
12 it means in terms of having sufficient level of
13 explainability, reasons given, is a question that is a
14 merger of legal expertise, policy expertise, and
15 scientific savvy.

16 So groups, for example, like NHSTA that were
17 mentioned before who are coming up with standard
18 settings in various areas, I think they are onto the
19 idea that while they have these laboratories with
20 scientists who are developing what's possible in terms
21 of the scientific capability, it behooves them to
22 reach out to legal policy analysts, not waiting --
23 sort of like the idea like we'll develop the
24 technology first, and then the law will give us a
25 thumbs-up/thumbs-down. Getting the legal policy input

1 along with the generation of this emergent technology,
2 I think, is really critical and key.

3 PROFESSOR HO: Yeah, I'll say one other thing,
4 just in terms of where the case law is headed here.
5 Many folks in the audience will know of the Wisconsin
6 Supreme Court's case in the Loomis decision, where the
7 criminal risk assessment score was challenged under
8 due process.

9 And one of the claims by Eric Loomis in that case
10 was that the risk assessment algorithm was closed
11 source, and it was not possible to actually know how
12 the risk score was calculated.

13 And the way the Wisconsin Supreme Court disposed
14 of the case was to conclude that because the inputs
15 into the algorithm in the presentencing report were
16 all available and transparent, there was no due
17 process violation in not being able to peek underneath
18 the hood.

19 And I think if there's one thing a report really
20 highlights is that it's going to be important for the
21 future of algorithmic governance to actually
22 understand how something really is engineered. It is
23 not enough, given the complexity of models, to say the
24 inputs are all transparent because there may be many
25 things going on underneath the hood that are going to

1 be important as a policy and as a legal matter.

2 MS. BRILL: So I want to open questions up to the
3 audience, if we hopefully still have some audience
4 members with us because this panel was scheduled to go
5 from 1:00 to 2:15 and to allow you to have some
6 opportunity after you heard the panelists to ask some
7 questions.

8 And one question that was brought up by the
9 audience was specific -- oh, to submit a question,
10 please type it in the chat box. So please open up
11 your chat box. All of you have one. It is there.
12 There is a part that says questions. Please go into
13 the questions, and if you have one, please go ahead
14 and submit it.

15 One question from the audience was what part of
16 the APA do you think AI challenges the most.

17 JUSTICE CUELLAR: Oh, I love that question. I'm
18 actually curious to hear what my colleagues say about
19 that.

20 MS. BRILL: Great.

21 JUSTICE CUELLAR: I'll just throw out what counts
22 as arbitrary and capriciousness has been zipped up
23 kind of at the heart of administrative law for a
24 while, a portion of it, and I think that this is a
25 really great moment where the question is being culled

1 in a new way by the intersection of user interfaces,
2 algorithms, data, and organizational performance. And
3 I think we'll have to be a lot more specific about
4 what that means.

5 PROFESSOR SHARKEY: Yeah, I would just echo -- I
6 mean, a bunch of work that I've done outside of AI has
7 focused on how courts increasingly try to scrutinize
8 kind of the empirical basis for what makes something a
9 reasonable decision on the part of the agency.

10 And so the focus, you know, this idea of what
11 part of machine learning/AI that gets infused,
12 particularly in the regulatory rule-making context, is
13 going to, I think, require probably the most work.

14 MS. BRILL: There's a question -- oh I'm sorry,
15 Professor Engstrom.

16 PROFESSOR ENGSTROM: I was going to say this is
17 just a give a boy a hammer moment. Everything looks
18 like a nail. But I think this (inaudible) enforcement
19 has always been this tweener governance task. It's
20 always existed in this kind of limbo. It's both a
21 wholesale and a retail endeavor that has an
22 adjudicative component. It has a rule-making
23 component to it. And so I think that there is going
24 to be some very interesting sort of near to midterm
25 thinking that needs to be done about whether we might

1 want to reshape ex-post review, allow relatively more
2 challenges to enforcement decision-making that would
3 require some kind of an amendment to the Heckler V.
4 Chaney line of cases.

5 It's also conceivable that we would want to
6 declare algorithms and algorithmic systems of various
7 types rules that are -- that must go through notice
8 and comment. That doesn't mean every algorithmic
9 system would have to do so, but some would, and we
10 could try to think about smart line drawings to
11 determine which types of algorithmic systems do have
12 to be pushed through that process. But -- and I think
13 it could be done.

14 But I think that -- I do think there'll be some
15 very interesting thinking there, and it does present
16 all the usual trade-offs between ex-post review of
17 enforcement decision-making or other types of
18 decision-making or in a notice-and-comment context, we
19 could kind of call that ex-ante review.

20 MS. BRILL: Thank you. There is a question
21 specifically for Professor Ho. I'm going to put you
22 on the spot. Professor Ho, can you speak more on the
23 potential for reverse engineering of systems and
24 overly transparent systems? Are there any policy
25 remedies to mitigate them?

1 PROFESSOR HO: As a law professor, it's nice to
2 have the tables turned on me to be cold-called
3 (inaudible) like this. So just so I understand the
4 question, what are the potential remedies for kind of
5 reserve engineering, I take it?

6 Yeah, I think it's going to be one of those
7 fairly domain-specific inquiries. So for instance, in
8 the trademark context or the patent context, are there
9 kind of good faith obligations. And so if there is
10 someone who has used a reverse-engineered kind of mark
11 to evade the computer vision algorithm, it's an open
12 question whether that would potentially violate sort
13 of the practice rules in front of the PTO.

14 But my other colleagues may also have other
15 insights here as to the kinds of concerns that arise.
16 There are, of course, other instances where
17 transparency and like reverse engineering, if you've
18 got the incentives set up right, may actually be the
19 desirable thing.

20 So for instance, I think this is the interesting
21 contrast between sort of benefits algorithms and
22 enforcement algorithms. In the benefits context, if
23 part of what happens is you're making much more
24 transparent the conditions under which you're entitled
25 to a disability benefit, that may not be reverse

1 engineering. You may actually be more crisply
2 communicating what the eligibility criteria are, and
3 that may actually be something that is desirable,
4 given the documented amount of discretion that we do
5 see in making disability determinations.

6 PROFESSOR ENGSTROM: So can I tack on just a
7 little bit there? Which is if you really look into
8 the emerging, quite excellent literature on
9 transparency around AI, both in the private sector and
10 in the public sector, there's lots of interesting
11 conversation about what transparency means, what types
12 of explanations would satisfy it.

13 So a distinction you'll often see is between
14 decision-level transparency and system-level
15 transparency. Decision-level transparency is where a
16 person might be entitled to some very thorough
17 explanation as to the provenance of the particular
18 decision. But it could be that transparency is hashed
19 out quite nicely by more system-level explanation.
20 Like what are the -- you know, what are the basics of
21 the model, what are the basics of the data inputs,
22 things like that.

23 And so I think here, it's important to note that
24 the logics and the imperatives of different governance
25 tasks are really different. The logics and

1 imperatives of enforcement are very different from,
2 say, the social welfare benefits context.

3 And so we might want decision-level transparency
4 in the welfare context. But we can't provide that in
5 the enforcement context because it kills the tool. If
6 you open source the tool, you kill its usefulness.

7 MS. BRILL: So in a sense, you're saying it
8 should be context-specific for potentially what level
9 of transparency we have. And it's quite interesting -
10 - we don't have enough time for everyone's questions,
11 but many of the questions revolve around transparency
12 and what can be done to -- to solve the issues with
13 that.

14 And I can't say what's in the minds of the people
15 that are writing it, but I think it comes from the not
16 understanding and the concern and then everything
17 around the fear. And maybe if we understood what
18 these types of systems were doing, then we would feel
19 a lot more comfortable.

20 And I think as -- for those of you who have
21 questions that weren't answered, there are there more
22 panels on this report, and there will be more
23 discussions about these issues.

24 So I want to end on this question. As you're all
25 lawyers, and you're all technologists, and you all

1 have put together this great work, will Congress now
2 need to enact new statutes to govern how agencies use
3 new AI tools, or will existing statutes be adequate to
4 the task? And let it be known, this is an audience
5 question. I'm not cold calling you. Any professor
6 can jump in whenever they feel comfortable. But what
7 do you think about what Congress needs to do?

8 PROFESSOR SHARKEY: So I'll jump in with -- I'll
9 take it on small bore in the following way. There was
10 a dispute that surfaced that's actually not reported
11 in our report because we didn't focus -- we didn't do
12 a use case study for NHSTA, but we did review various
13 officials for NHSTA, et cetera, and there was a
14 disagreement as to whether or not their current
15 regulatory status allowed them to mandate that car
16 manufacturers give them direct data or not and what
17 this meant for the future of their use of machine
18 learning and AI.

19 And so I guess before -- what I would want to do
20 is before answering that question about Congress does
21 or doesn't have to do, it would be worth studying
22 existing regulatory mandates, agency by agency, and
23 engaging in these debates about what -- you know, how
24 you can push the limits in terms of saying that the
25 agency already has the authority.

1 And I would center many of these questions around
2 gathering of data, at least for agencies like NHSTA
3 and FDA that are going to be these regulators of
4 health and safety out in the real world.

5 PROFESSOR HO: Yeah, I also am reluctant to
6 speculate as to what exactly Congress should do. But
7 I do want to kind of answer this broader theme,
8 Hillary, that you're pointing out as to concerns about
9 transparency because I really do think it goes back to
10 the point about internal capacity. That is the most
11 complicated machine learning models right now could be
12 sledgehammers to kill a fly. That is, there are --
13 there's a kind of complexity/accuracy trade-off. But
14 it may not always require a sledgehammer to solve
15 particular problems. And the people who are going to
16 be best situated to really understand that are going
17 to be agency staff who have an insight into these
18 tools and understand the domain. And that's really
19 where we think some of the biggest gains are likely to
20 be made.

21 There is also some real fruitful models here, for
22 instance, in terms of academic agency collaborations
23 to start to bring in some of that insight in-house
24 into the agency. So I'm not sure about any specific
25 recommendations, but I think it is important to think

1 about the internal capacity within agencies to
2 navigate that transparency, complexity, accuracy
3 trade-off in choosing which tools are suitable for the
4 problem at hand.

5 JUSTICE CUELLAR: I really like Professor Ho's
6 answer, and I'll just build on it by making the
7 following observation: there are two considerations
8 that are normative and one that's descriptive,
9 practical, that might inform any discussion of this
10 topic.

11 The first normative consideration is how much we
12 can realistically imagine a trans substantive approach
13 to AI that is going to make sense at a high level of
14 generality like APA style for NHSTA and for FDA and
15 for the SEC and for SSA and so on. And I have my
16 doubts.

17 I think part of what is helpful about this report
18 is to highlight how there are definitely cross-cutting
19 themes, but there's a lot of context-specific, subtle
20 work that really is right at the intersection of some
21 fairly bespoke technical issues and some very bespoke
22 legal and factual and politically common issues that
23 should live at the more specific level.

24 The other normative consideration is how much we
25 want to preempt the kind of experimentation happening

1 not only in the private sector but in the states.
2 Laboratories of democracy with one or another
3 crosscutting solution.

4 The descriptive, practical observation is
5 Congress has had real trouble passing even basic
6 cybersecurity legislation. It's not exactly in a
7 particularly productive period of its history for any
8 number of reasons. So query whether we can expect a
9 lot of action.

10 MS. BRILL: We didn't ask if Congress would.
11 Well, I guess -- if they should.

12 JUSTICE CUELLAR: Just throwing it in as an added
13 bonus for what it's worth.

14 MS. BRILL: I don't want to cut you off, but we
15 have just a moment in closing, and I wanted to thank
16 all of you for the great insight and hard work that
17 you put into this report and the table setting.

18 I mean, you brought up all the issues. You
19 brought up all of the themes. You did most of my
20 work. You just summarized the fact that a lot of this
21 is context-specific, and a lot of the themes are
22 across the board discussions that other people seem to
23 want to hear about are about transparency, are about
24 what is bias, what does that mean, and who decides it,
25 and what are the actual agencies that are going to be

1 determining that and setting those standards, and what
2 is the public/private connection with that
3 relationship.

4 And you said this is 64 years in the making. I
5 don't think we have 64 more years to answer those
6 questions, although -- you know, it could happen that
7 someone else could be talking about remember that
8 webinar back 64 years ago. But we do need good
9 discussions, and the rest of this symposium will
10 hopefully bring it to the experts that joined us. So
11 thank you all today for -- plenty of thank you to the
12 audience, and thank you again to ACUS and everyone who
13 helped make this possible.

14 MULTIPLE VOICES: Thank you.

15 (End of audio recording.)

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CERTIFICATE

I, Wendy Sawyer, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and transcribed the foregoing recorded proceedings and that the transcript is a true record, to the best of my ability.

DATED this 9th day of July, 2020.



WENDY SAWYER, CDLT

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