

Why AI Needs Real Regulation: Roy Austin on the RegulatingAI Podcast with Sanjay Puri

Roy Austin on RegulatingAI Podcast: AI moves faster than laws, risking civil rights, jobs, and safety—real regulation and accountability are urgent.

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Artificial Intelligence is advancing at breakneck speed, transforming every aspect of our lives—from how we work to how we learn, communicate, and govern. On the [RegulatingAI](#) Podcast hosted by [Sanjay Puri](#), [Roy Austin](#), a leading voice in civil rights, law, and technology, lays out why this rapid innovation is outpacing regulation, creating risks for society, and why real oversight is urgently needed. Austin, a professor at Howard University School of Law and former deputy assistant to President Obama, has spent decades confronting systemic inequities. In conversation with Puri, he warns that without effective regulation, AI development risks harming civil rights, democratic processes, and the workforce, all while a small number of tech elites accumulate unprecedented power and influence.

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Roy Austin

The Pace of AI vs. Regulation

“We have a technology moving faster than any we've seen in human history,” Austin emphasizes. Unlike past innovations, AI evolves daily, scaling globally in ways laws cannot keep up with. Child safety, employment, and civil rights are all at risk, yet governance remains slow and fragmented. According to Austin, the current system is



RegulatingAI Podcast



Roy Austin on the RegulatingAI Podcast with Sanjay Puri, President, Knowledge Networks

reactive—regulators chase after technology rather than guiding it responsibly.

The Illusion of National Regulation

Big tech companies often call for “national regulation,” but Austin argues this is largely performative. Federal rules are slow, and in their absence, states try to fill the void. Tech uses this gap strategically, lobbying against state-level laws while claiming to want national frameworks. “They are playing people for fools,” Austin says, highlighting a pattern of regulatory capture where companies shape rules to favor themselves.

Civil Rights and Bias in AI

Drawing on his co-authored 2014 Obama administration report on big data, Austin explains, “Garbage in, garbage out.” AI systems trained on biased or incomplete data replicate inequities. The infamous example of Amazon’s AI hiring tool—biased against women and minorities—illustrates the danger. Now, with AI systems like ChatGPT reaching hundreds of millions globally, the potential for harm scales exponentially.

U.S. vs. EU Approaches

Austin compares the risk-based EU AI Act, which emphasizes transparency and human rights, with the U.S.’s fragmented sector-specific approach. He stresses that regulation does not stifle innovation; instead, it provides trust, accountability, and safety—necessary for AI to serve society rather than corporate profit.

Why Self-Regulation Fails

Ethics boards and oversight committees are inadequate. Austin notes oversight boards make few decisions annually while companies deploy millions of AI-driven choices daily. Without internal compliance teams and external independent oversight, there’s no accountability. Companies currently prioritize growth and wealth accumulation over public safety and civil rights.

Societal and Economic Impact

From job displacement to concentrated wealth, AI’s societal impact is profound. Austin warns that tech companies must take moral responsibility for employment disruption and civil rights harms. AI affects democracy, privacy, and even child safety. Without regulation, individuals and communities are left vulnerable.

Austin’s Recommendations

Austin advocates for:

Federal regulation complementing state laws, not preempting them.

Internal company infrastructure for responsible AI.

Independent external oversight agencies.

Education to help humans evaluate AI outputs critically.

Inclusive decision-making centered on civil rights.

Conclusion

Roy Austin's discussion on Sanjay Puri's RegulatingAI Podcast makes one thing clear: AI will not self-regulate. Without thoughtful oversight, ethical frameworks, and diverse leadership, the technology could widen inequities, harm individuals, and concentrate power in the hands of a few. Responsible AI isn't just a technical issue—it's a societal imperative, and the time to act is now.

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