Personal Position: Restoring Internet Freedom Act

Against the motion

Net Neutrality preserves our right to communicate freely online. It enables an internet without any restrictions and protects free speech as mentioned by Jon Crowcroft. Net Neutrality means that ISP's do not have the right to block content on internet and must provide users with free and open networks. By blocking content, the reference is to blocking against content or applications for any reason. Users should have the free will of choosing and viewing whatever they want to use without having to decide based on cost or speed or one application over another.

Net Neutrality poses some rules on ISP’s which means they have to bind to some regulations. In the absence of Net Neutrality, users would be subject to increased dependence on ISP’s which could mean accessing or blocking some pages, blocking peer to peer transfers, curbing unfavorable content on self, differentiating between speed of services from competitors depending on how much money they make from them, selling or misusing customer usage data and breaching privacy.

The recent introduction of ‘Restoring Internet Freedom Act’ in the senate has given rise to new questions and debates over the same issue. Sen. Lee says, "The economic burden of these regulations will fall squarely on the backs of the consumers the FCC purports to help”. I strongly disagree with this stance. In the face of the bill introduced by Sen. Lee in senate which would repeal the Federal Communication Commission's net neutrality rules, my opinion is to not go forward with ‘Restoring Internet Freedom Act’. If the act is read closely, it says that the act will lift regulations on ISP’s. This means that ISP’s would be free to function and do as per their will and not be answerable to any organization and will not have to bind by any basic rules.

The question here is, ‘Is giving ISP’s such freedom good?’. The answer is NO. There can be cases where wealthy big firms buy ISP’s and dominate the internet space. The points discussed about such as accessing or blocking some pages, blocking peer to peer transfers, curbing unfavorable content on self, differentiating between speed of services from competitors depending on how much money they make from them, selling or misusing customer usage data and breaching privacy would come into picture if ISP’s are given the amount of freedom to do as they wish. The idea is not that they will do, but this act opens gates which would allow them to be legally binding and still participate in the above-mentioned things. This is very detrimental to the common public since they lose the option to choose and pick which is a very important right in a democratic country.

The repercussions of this act would be unwarranted domination by ISP’s in the internet market resulting in competition between big firms providing internet solutions. This will stifle innovation in the internet space since firms will spend majority of their efforts trying to get their content to the users by buying rights from ISP’s rather than spending efforts and funds in innovating in their products and services.

References:

Jon Crowcroft, Jan 2007. Net neutrality: the technical side of the debate: a white paper

Sen. Lee, 2016. Sen. lee introduces the restoring internet freedom act. (2016). (). Lanham: Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc.

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