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Open letter to the FCC regarding Net-Neutrality.

Neither the marketplace nor consumers at any level will benefit from changes to our net-neutrality rules. Promises of increased competition through deregulation or changes to regulation have been made before and never materialized the way they were supposed to.

I live in middle of the 17th wealthiest county in America (Marin) and George Lucas is my neighbor. If Mr. Lucas had not installed his own fiber optic network to his home, he would have one choice of high speed wireline internet provider, just as I do – Comcast. I’m told I have 65,000 other household neighbors who are in the same situation. And this pattern generally spreads out across Comcast’s national footprint. Ten years ago, we had a second wireline provider, AT&T, but they have been slowly abandoning their copper wire DSL business. Thus we have zero competition.

Large cable companies like Comcast and Charter now virtually control 60% of the US wireline internet service provider market and gained this unfathomable level of market share in a very short period of time. I don’t think that is what legislators and regulators had in mind when they gave the cable industry a leg up when Ma Bell was vigorously blocking their entry to the communications markets. Consumers were promised competition and universal coverage (like electricity or wireline phone) and there remains no bright line to the delivery of that promise. If mobile or fixed wireless broadband were a substitute for wireline broadband, then we wouldn’t suffer from lack of adequate service all across rural America.

Now that cable and telephone companies (AT&T and Verizon) are buying up megalithic content companies, they will, by any definition, have far too much control after they collapse the content markets.

Absent of legitimate competition in the wireline ISP market, consumers have no choice and no protection. . If the FCC and FTC are not going to “break up” these “natural monopoly” companies, as they should, then at the very least, internet service providers like Comcast should continue to be heavily restricted as to how much control they have over content. In that regard, they should be viewed as the Uber of the internet. They transport packets. If they want own and sell some of those packets, that fine. Let the markets provide the competition that drives consumer benefits. Common carriage rules are enhancing competition in spite of big cable and telecom company’s efforts to block new entrants and innovation.

We all used to by our landline phone service from AT&T and everyone had the same black phone. That all changed with the breakup. Today I buy my electricity from PG&E, but they don’t tell me what toaster to use. That I have one choice of internet service provider is economically immoral. That the federal government might help Comcast control the essential materials of free speech is simply un-American.