Net neutrality is crucial. The internet is involved in every facet of daily life – people use the internet to inform and entertain themselves, to communicate with friends and family, to do business. Net neutrality is what has enabled the internet to make it easier and more convenient for Americans to do all of these things. It allows people to choose the services and modes of communication that are right for them, without adding complications like pointlessly slowed service, or additional costs to use something that is ostensibly free.

Let me share one example of a time when the internet helped me. Last year, there was an emergency at work, and we were under lockdown. While I was hiding under a desk for two hours with a couple of my coworkers, I used various apps and websites to keep us informed about what was happening and how to stay safe, and pass that information on to others. I messaged my parents, who lived in another part of the state; and my brother, who was studying abroad, to update them and let them know I was all right. I contacted my friends to tell them to stay away from the area, and to stay home if they lived nearby. I worked in a university library at the time, and part of my job duties involved running my workplace’s social media accounts, so I used those to share updates and safety tips for the students, faculty, staff, and local community. I did all this while crouching under a desk with my phone and laptop.

Without net neutrality, none of that would have been possible. I wouldn’t have had as many options for gathering and sharing information, and the messaging apps I use might never have been developed or popularized. If an ISP had decided to throttle service for one of those apps or websites, for instance, effectively removing it from the playing field before users had their say, my morning might have gone very differently. My family might not have been able to find out where I was or whether I was all right, and I might not have been able to help keep myself, my coworkers, and the campus community safe.

Net neutrality isn’t just important in dire situations. It’s what allowed a wide variety of sites and perspectives to grow. The basic principle that no website is prioritized over another by internet service providers means that users can make their own choices about which services to use and where to spend their time. It may not be perfect, but it’s better than the alternatives, and it’s what allowed the internet to become the vibrant space that it is.

Please, save net neutrality. Make sure that future generations can have access to the options and opportunities that we’ve had.