

It is of great concern to the internet community that the Commission is considering allowing cable broadband internet service providers to operate what is called in industry circles, a "walled-garden" model of internet access.

If the cable service provider is required to allow all ISPs equal access to their outside plant, this is acceptable. If, however, the Commission proposes to allow both "walled garden" models with a monopoly of service, it can become impossible to obtain points of view that are alternative to those approved by the cable service provider. This is due to the fact that there are many regions in the United States where economical broadband service is the only means of obtaining broadband Internet access at a price affordable to residential consumers. I live in such an area. My home is 26,000 feet from a telephone CO, and it is very unlikely that DSL of any reasonable speed and quality of service will ever be available to me. If my current cable provider were to provide only a "walled garden" Internet service to me, I would be forced to return to dial-up internet service, as my interests are not mainstream and are unlikely to be served adequately by a "walled garden" ISP.

Please consider that I am not alone. There are millions of Americans like myself who deserve and need a competitive broadband service. There are vast areas where cable has achieved considerable penetration, but where the bulk of subscribers are too far from telephone COs to be provisionable on DSL. This is the main reason that DSL has not achieved significant penetration.

Please consider that the millions of Americans who will never be provisionable by DSL deserve competitive ISP service as much as those fortunate enough to be living close to their local CO. The very idea of a "walled garden" ISP model is antithetical to healthy civic debate and intellectual ferment, and if it is allowed a monopoly position in the market, then internet communications in the United States will begin to resemble those in China, where only non-dissenting opinions are allowed. Is this the kind of America we want?