

FCC Advocates For "Pay Speech"

In the 1950's and 60's my childhood was full of danger and crisis. My mother suffered from debilitating depression and regularly attempted suicide. She was a professional musician, who was quite beautiful and very lonely and vulnerable. There was a parade of strangers through our home on a regular basis. Some of these strangers were men who were pedophiles. I was sexually molested seven times throughout my childhood. The first rape occurred when I was 5 years old and the last rape occurred when I was 16. My mother barely made enough to keep us going. Sometimes we would go 4 or 5 days without food because we couldn't afford to buy groceries.

My brother and sister and I never talked about our problems to anyone, not our relatives, nor our friends or neighbors.

The one place I felt safe to be was our local library.

Each Saturday my older brother and sister would take me to the library. We would usually spend most of the day there. Each week I would pick out 3 books to take home to read. I can still remember the smells and quite sounds of that little library. I can remember that each book had it's own unique smell. I read the Dick & Jane books, the Dr Zeuss books. I read biographies of famous women: Eleanor Roosevelt, Margaret Meade, Amelia Earhart. My two most favorite books I read during my childhood were The Diary of Ann Frank and To Kill A Mockingbird.

Those books that I read transported me to a kinder and safer place where I could just be a child. They gave me strength and offered me hope.

I think how very different my life would have been if I hadn't had access to that library. For instance, had there been a fee to read all of those wonderful books I wouldn't have been able to afford to read any of them.

I am sure my story is not unique. Many other people have had their lives enriched by books and other forms of art. Knowledge is power. The connections we have with other people is as essential to our ability to evolve as water and air. Our democracy cannot survive if education returns to something only the elite can afford.

Today I use the Internet as I once used the libraries.

I help take care of my mother-in-law, who is 92 and my aunt who is 89 and living with Alzheimers. I do medical research on their behalf. I also use the Internet to read about local, national and international news from a broad spectrum of sources. I read book reviews, order books, clothes and other products on-line. I purchase concert tickets, sign petitions, email elected officials, contribute to political campaigns and non-profit organizations. All of these things are accomplished from my

personal computer at my home.

For people who live in remote areas, or are unable to leave their homes the Internet is a life-line. It allows people who would otherwise be disenfranchised to be active, contributing members of our society.

The idea that the FCC is moving towards ending any semblance of a neutral internet is absolutely outrageous! It likens to our government deciding 40 years ago to charge people admission fees to our libraries, or charge people to listen to the radio or pay to watch TV. Oh dear. Come to think of it, at present many people do pay to listen to the radio or watch TV. We are definitely not moving in the right direction.

What does the FCC have in mind for us next, Pay Speech?