

Please protect net neutrality

The internet has fundamentally changed my life. I simply cannot overstate how important it is to me, and everyone else. It is my business lifeblood, and an immeasurable asset to my personal life.

I am a self-taught graphics artist and musician, and care for my aged mother at home. The internet allows me to work at home while being immediately available if she needs me. I create web sites, retail packaging, and advertising for clients, and perform photo retouching, all from my home. I can freely and immediately collaborate with the client while developing the work, and can deliver my finished work and invoices via email.

I have collaborated with other musicians that I have never met, to create and complete the soundtrack for a movie. I am currently putting a professional performing musical duo together with someone who lives an hour's drive away from me, and, thanks to what's possible online, we seldom have to physically get together to learn material or exchange ideas, saving untold gallons of gasoline, miles on our vehicles, time, money, trees, and greenhouse gas emissions.

I have saved many thousands of dollars shopping online for the things I need. I bank online, finding out immediately if I have the money in my account to cover a purchase, and can buy something immediately, saving the many days it would take to send and clear a check. People can pay me money immediately via PayPal.

I can sell an item that I no longer need, and get the best price possible, because the person who really wants and needs it, can find it.

I can research any subject, getting information from a library nearly as large as the Earth itself, in seconds, with just a handful of keystrokes. I can buy books on any subject at greatly reduced prices, and have them on their way to me in minutes.

From my own website, people that I have grown away from, and haven't heard from in decades, are able to find me, re-establishing personal relationships and enriching my personal life greatly. I can send them pictures and video instantly. I can't begin to tell you how much that is worth to me.

I can find instantly find out what is going on in the world, hearing news and opinion from practically anyone on the planet, and immediately respond to it, just like I'm doing now. With rare exception, opinions from anyone in the world are available to anyone else, allowing the truth of any issue to be told, free of censorship. It may not be believed, but at least it can be expressed, which is extremely important to any number of cultures, and yes, a human race itself dedicated to the ideal of free speech.

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, PROTECT NET NEUTRALITY, and don't allow mega-corporations to strangle the internet to enrich their own already too-large coffers. The World Wide Web is way, way too important to allow it to be corrupted, manipulated, censored, and regulated for the benefit of the highest bidder.

Several years ago, my household had long distance telephone service provided by AT&T. When we learned that we could get the same service for 5 cents per minute instead of the 15 cents per minute that AT&T was charging, we switched providers. In response, in their final bill, AT&T raised the rate on our remaining outstanding calls to 40 cents per minute.

I would also recall a time, not that long ago, when it became apparent that "Ma Bell" could save themselves enormous costs by changing over from rotary-phone based equipment that used high voltages, to newer, much more efficient touch-tone technology, which used a tiny fraction of the electricity to operate and equip. They saved themselves enormous costs by switching over equipment that would eventually need to be replaced anyway. Nonetheless, they were allowed for many years to charge every one of their customers a dollar a month for the "privilege" of touch-tone service, with our government's blessing.

This is indicative of the integrity that such corporations possess, and demonstrative of just where their priorities are. Way too much of our vital services and interests are being sold out from under us by money-slinging lobbyists, who do nothing short of arranging bribes to our elected representatives, who should be looking out for our interests, but often aren't.

Please don't be a party to this immense, ongoing sell-out of the average American citizen's interests to mega-corporations, at home and on the world stage. We have already been sold down the river to the banking industry, the insurance industry, the medical industry, the pharmaceuticals industry, the energy industries, the oil companies, the auto industry, the communications industry, and so on, right on down to where we are currently sacrificing our very sons' and daughters' lives, and mortgaging their financial future, in a war that was sold to us on lies, for the benefit of a monopolistic oil cartel and a political party that serves these other monopolies as well, at the expense and to the detriment of the average citizen, not only in this country, but around the world.

But, thanks to the internet, AT LEAST WE CAN FREELY TALK ABOUT IT. It is a communications lifeline between all people providing, perhaps, our last glimmer of hope to set things right. It is a boon to humanity so valuable, that to compare it to television, radio, telephones, or even newspapers, is selling its value astronomically short.

It is nothing short of instant, uncensored communication between anyone in the world who can afford

to get hooked up. And THAT is the crux of the issue; allowing huge corporations to charge some people more than others for their ability to communicate, will thus allow them to regulate information vital to humanity itself, for their own financial, and even political benefit, to the detriment of all others.

If the telecommunications industry had been allowed to continue its monopoly years ago, it is doubtful that the internet would have been allowed to develop as it did, taking instead the form of an expensive network for the benefit of a privileged few, enabling them with further powers to exploit those less-monied than they. Breaking up the monopoly then was the right thing to do, benefitting everyone, and preventing their attempt at monopoly now is, too.

PLEASE, for the sake of the American citizen, and even worldwide humanity itself, KEEP THE INTERNET FREE.