

The issue of "net neutrality" is actually very simple: I pay my ISP to send and receive data with other locations on the Internet. Those other locations pay their ISP to connect to me. The two ISPs have "peering agreements" (possibly with other ISPs between, but that's not important) to transfer my and others' data between them. This is simple and makes sense: everybody pays for their own access.

Now, some ISPs want to change this, by withholding some locations' ability to connect to me at reasonable speed -- that they've *already paid* their own ISP for -- unless they also pay *my* ISP! It is obvious that, at the very least, this is double-dipping, since my ISP is already being paid (by me, and by the benefit of the peering agreement) for both sides of the connection.

That reason alone -- the double-dipping -- is sufficient to mandate network neutrality via legislation.

However, there's also another reason: the particular locations my ISP chooses to extort (and yes, that is an appropriate word to use) are "coincidentally" the ones which compete with other parts of the ISP. For example, AT&T wishes to throttle Vonage because it competes with AT&T's own VoIP service, Comcast wishes to throttle video providers because they compete with Comcast's cable TV service, etc. This is obviously illegally anti-competitive behavior! Not to mention the Mafia-esque aspect of it: "gee, that's a nice web-based service you've got there; it'd be a shame if you didn't pay us protection money and something [like us throttling your connection] *happened* to it!"

So now, we have not one, but two reasons for network neutrality, each of which alone is reason enough for it. Together, it becomes a real no-brainer.

Incidentally, this whole problem could be prevented if the same people weren't allowed to offer both network connections and content.