

Everyone Must Have a Voice

This country was born in the 1700s, and in the 1900s, the Internet was born within this country. The Internet was originally a closed, specialty network that was used largely by educational and governmental institutions, but since the early- to mid-1990s, it has been open to the public as a medium used to exercise our rights to free speech, freedom of expression, and so forth.

It is important that we keep the Internet open for everyone to be able to communicate and share. When I think about some of the possibilities of what might happen if the Internet is no longer a neutral ground for everyone, the results are somewhat scary. Microsoft could pay millions of dollars to ISPs around the country to prevent people from being able to go to <http://www.ubuntu.com/> and download a free, legal, and freedom-oriented operating system for their PCs. They could pay to prevent people from getting OpenOffice.org and using that instead of Microsoft Office.

Ignorance would only grow and be helped by making the Internet a non-neutral ground and tilting the medium towards those with the large pocketbooks. I like being able to use the Internet to say what I have to say, do my school work, and research topics. If the Internet is no longer neutral, however, I (and many others) will have to work doubly or triply as hard---maybe even harder---to find reliable, non-biased information and resources. Getting the word out for projects in the name of freedom will become harder. Free software like GNU/Linux systems and OpenOffice can quickly lose out simply because those who oppose them---such as Microsoft---can shell out enough money to suffocate the projects of hits.

Net Neutrality is essential to free speech, equal opportunity and economic innovation in America. Since the FCC removed this basic protection in 2005, the top executives of phone and cable companies have stated their intention to become the Internet's gatekeepers and to discriminate against Web sites that don't pay their added tolls.

This fundamental change would end the open Internet as we know it. It would damage my ability to connect with others, share information and participate in our 21st century democracy and economy. The FCC must ensure that broadband providers do not block, interfere with or discriminate against any lawful Internet traffic based on its ownership, source or destination.