

## NET NEUTRALITY:A MUST FOR DEMOCRACY & EDUCATION

I am a retired high school teacher and college instructor in biology. My interest in education persists long after my actual classroom duties. I have been working on a non fiction book for young readers that could be used as a supplement in their biology, history, sociology, geography and ecology studies. However, it is essential that I have free access to the internet to obtain up to date information on a subject that has never been published for children and not readily available to adults prior to ten or fifteen years ago. I could not afford to pay a fee every time I wanted to obtain information on the internet. Although a fee might not be charged to me directly by the "gate-keepers." my sources would have to pay that fee which would mean they might either have to charge me or they would no longer be able to put information on the internet.

My son is abroad and at present I can contact him freely via email. US mail would take a week or more and then I wouldn't be sure he would get my letter. Some less developed countries have unreliable postal employees. My daughters & I have had some difficulties with the mail. Then it would be about 10 days for a reply.

Now for an even more important issue:-

Many hundreds of volunteers for VOTE SMART have worked hard for years to obtain copies of every speech of every member of the US Senate and House of Representatives ----not only "on the floor" but wherever they were interviewed or spoke at graduations or anywhere else. They have also cataloged all their votes in Congress and how their votes have been ranked by various citizens' groups (environmental, educational, Religious Right and others.)

They also make available an accounting of the sources of campaign contributions for each one.

This has also been done for every candidate for every federal & state office. It has been a monumental task and all this valuable information is made available, FREE, to anyone who wants it. It is non-biased. There is no "spin," just the facts and is the very best, most thorough information available on line, by phone or in a printed booklet until they are all gone.

Vote Smart does not receive any funds from the government, big business or lobbyists. It is therefore non partisan and beholden to no one.

None of this would have been possible, nor would it be available free to all of us without Net Neutrality, so we MUST NOT LOSE IT. It is essential to our democracy, 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.