

Internet Neutrality Stimulates Democracy

Beginning in high school, for the past several years I have been highly engaged in the nation's public policy debates and active in advocacy campaigns meant to pressure Congress into taking action on various issues. One of the major reasons for my civic engagement, and that of millions of other young people like myself, is that online advocacy groups have been able to bring together millions of people over the internet and email. However, by allowing different websites to receive different web service based on their ability to pay, and thus eliminating internet neutrality, the FCC threatens to destroy the grassroots online advocacy groups that largely lack the money to spend on maintaining proper internet service from internet service providers. This would undermine a new flowering of democracy over the internet just as it is beginning to spark greater civic engagement in the critical issues of our time.

Furthermore, small online sellers and merchants -- such as several of my friends -- would also suffer without the open, democratic marketplace of the internet. It is clear that while eliminating internet neutrality laws may open up new growth for a single industry -- telecommunications -- this would come at the expense of far more broad-based, decentralized, widespread, and economically beneficial growth among small online players.

Some regulations may hurt the overall business environment. But this regulation -- net neutrality -- significantly enhances it.