

Internet succumbs to conflict of interests

The Internet is steadily losing that which made it a valuable and completely new and unique medium of communication. Commercial interests are being allowed to incrementally exert their drive for profit at the expense of free and open communication on the Internet. It's as if today's face-to-face conversations on the street or in cafes or stores or the workplace could be sorted and selectively censored according to the tyrannies of the various corporations in the world.

We wouldn't be having this discussion about net neutrality if the mistake of exempting Internet communications from the common carrier restrictions hadn't been made years ago.

Many times after commercial entities were first allowed to provide Internet backbone service, there were periodic discussions of how to equitably carry another provider's traffic. The Internet community's conclusion reached each time was "I'll carry yours if you carry mine." No segregation or segmentation of the Internet occurred in the many years before data was treated differently than voice communications.

(Please note, voice is carried by data technologies and has been for a very long time. Phone company research invented these technologies and drawing the IS/TS distinction in the 1996 communications act was damaging.)

People sometimes try to say that services like AOL and Compuserve are counterexamples to my common carrier point above but I think we can all see now these kinds of "gated communities" in our digital age are merely connected to the Internet, not examples of the fundamental character of the Internet. Please note the rapid deterioration of these preferential environments.

Allowing commercial entities to erect barriers to entry, preferential service and other perversions of Internet use where there were none before will cause the corruption of this first international level playing field for human interaction we call the Internet. Please think long and hard about shifting the game to favor the major commercial interests. They aren't capable of doing the right thing for the future of the Internet.

I ask that you prevent conflicts of interest for Internet backbone providers. These conflicts will occur when a backbone provider arranges for better network access or throughput of his content or enduser services than a competitor providing similar enduser services has available. The kind of restriction or regulation I suggest has been done before, so let's stop the potential anti-trust behavior before it begins rather than fixing it years after it has become an obvious problem.

Like the Interstate highway system, the airline traffic corridors in the sky, the shipping lanes on the

oceans, the orbits above our planet or the moon, the Internet must be treated similarly and thus rescued from the greed that has been asserting itself against the concept of net neutrality.