

Comcast's blatant and deceptive blocking of peer-to-peer communications is exactly the problem millions of Americans have warned would occur without Net Neutrality protections.

The FCC must take serious and immediate action to put an abrupt end to this harmful practice and prevent other Internet service providers from following Comcast's example of discriminating against the free flow of online information.

The Internet is a vital engine for economic growth, civic participation and free speech. We simply can't allow corporate gatekeepers to smother these democratic communications by discriminating against new technologies, secretly interfering with Internet traffic and stifling innovation.

Also, from savetheinternet.com:

Comcast Blocking: First the Internet " Now the Public

There was huge turnout at today's public hearing in Boston on the future of the Internet. Hundreds of concerned citizens arrived to speak out on the importance of an open Internet. Many took the day off from work " standing outside in the Boston cold " to see the FCC Commissioners. But when they reach the door, they're told they couldn't come in.

The size of the crowd is evidence that many Americans don't want giant corporations like Comcast and Verizon to decide what we can do and where we can go on the Internet.

Markey's sleeper cell

But will the FCC hear these voices? For many people who showed up on time for the hearing, apparently not.

Comcast " or someone who really, really likes Comcast " evidently bused in its own crowd. These seat-warmers, were paid to fill the room, a move that kept others from taking part.

[Update: Comcast admits to paying people to stack the room in their favor. Read the report.]

They arrived en masse some 90 minutes before the hearing began and occupied almost every available seat, upon which many promptly fell asleep (picture above).

Markey's seat warmers

One told us that he was "just getting paid to hold someone's seat."

>> Listen to the audio

He added that he had no idea what the meeting was about.

If he was holding someone else's seat, he never gave it up.

Many of this early crowd had mysteriously matching yellow highlighters stuck in their lapels.

MarkeyComcast payoff

We also photographed them outside the venue being handed papers by an organizer who had been seen earlier talking with several of the Comcast people at the hearing.

Here's why this is a problem. Comcast clearly paid disinterested people to fill seats. This barred interested citizens from entering.

More than 100 people who arrived at the appointed time for the hearing were turned away by campus police because the room was already full.

ComcastBarred: The interested public

The Cambridge hearing is part of the FCC's ongoing investigation into Comcast's blocking of Internet traffic. But there's much more at stake. We are at a critical juncture, where it will be decided whether we have a closed Internet controlled by a small handful of giant corporations, or an open Internet controlled by the people who use it.

Comcast wants the former to dictate which Web sites and services go fast, slow or don't load at all. And they're backed by the other would-be gatekeepers at AT&T, Verizon and Time Warner.

THIS IS WHAT THESE COMPANIES ARE ALL ABOUT: LIMITING FREE SPEECH TO INCREASE REVENUE. THIS IS WHAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO DO IF NET NEUTRALITY IS NOT ALLOWED TO REMAIN. PLEASE DON'T ALLOW THEM TO DO THIS. EVER!