

Joseph Christenson
1522 Portland Ave. Apt. 111
Saint Paul, MN
55104

I am currently a student at Macalester College, as well as a musician (I was a professional for two years; now it's part-time since I've resumed my undergraduate studies). I'm also a regular Internet user and much of my time as a musician has been spent online promoting shows, the project I was involved with, and reaching out to fans in various cities.

While I was a musician, the band I was in first released both a physical EP and a digital version through iTunes; we promoted it on MySpace and other online distribution sites. After some local success, we signed to a Sony/Red INK subsidiary label (a local "independent") and released a full-length album, distributed through Red INK, iTunes, etc. We played routinely, both locally and doing some touring through the Midwest and the East Coast.

As far as home Internet access goes, I have the choice between Qwest DSL and Comcast. Qwest was significantly cheaper (though still quite pricey, even with a "price for life" discount, at \$46.99 a month for 7 mpbs — never runs that fast, either). I feel like there is a virtual monopoly on the market and that there is little chance that real competition will drive these prices down (as it should in a regular market). The expensive infrastructural requirements to build up strong broadband networks preclude new businesses from entering the game without building parallel networks. I think this would be a waste of resources and strongly suggest a move toward a public works model.

On the road, wireless access was only available for free in hotel rooms (though the price was built into the cost of a room). Owning a smart phone with 3G access was prohibitively expensive, though I do know of musicians with more money who regularly used smart phones.

I believe the Internet is a great tool for promoting music in a grass roots fashion; however, the proliferation of new and free music has also made it difficult to win people over. However, I don't think this is necessarily a bad thing. People need access to information in order to determine what music and which musicians they favor, and the Internet has helped to democratize this process. However, major labels and multinational media companies are able to foreground their artists over independent artists, and it takes significant unpaid work for an independent musician to gain notoriety online. To do so usually requires some sort of distribution through multinational media companies, whether it be streaming audio on MySpace (News Corp), digital distribution through iTunes (Apple) or Amazon.com, etc. New services like SoundCloud and BandCamp are helping to provide alternatives to the multinational mode of distribution, but they will face significant challenges when it comes to access if net neutrality is not upheld.

I believe unauthorized file sharing should be dealt with solely by a government-sanctioned and independent regulatory body that exists OUTSIDE the influence of large

private companies. Copyright holders should be able to approach this external organization when they seek redress concerning unauthorized file sharing; leaving it to the ISPs will grant them, and multinational media companies, too much legal power and discretion for determining what are "reasonable actions" in a legal sense. The proliferation of unauthorized file sharing must be combated slowly and carefully; absurd fines and punishments should not be part of the process. Rather, regulation on the part of a governmental body, responsive to the public (appointments to it should be made in a fashion determined by the national legislature), and the independent judicial system should decide whether the regulatory measures, or "reasonable actions," are fair within the existing legal framework. Private companies do not need any more legal standing at this juncture (see the recent Supreme Court decision to grant corporations the same free speech rights as individuals). To do so is irresponsible and will perpetuate these companies' insistence that profit should come before consumer satisfaction.

I think also believe the FCC's national broadband plan is a bold and fantastic policy put forth by the Commission. It represents an ideal instance where a federal regulatory body seeks to create a better environment for everyone in the body politic as opposed to simply funneling more control and cash to private mega corporations. As a citizen and taxpayer, I fully support the use of my tax dollars to go toward further democratizing online space by allowing more people to access the Internet at lower costs. Location and income should never limit peoples' access to critical information in a free democracy.

I fully support measures to make net neutrality principles apply to the wireless space -- mobile access should be made more widely available, whether or not profit and growth can be maintained at the absurd rates they're currently measured at. Consumers and citizens should always come before private corporations, and free/cheap access to online information is a must in contemporary society.

Business has proven itself incapable of achieving this reality; only a federal regulatory agency like the FCC can ensure that innovation will continue without encountering monopolistic interests, and guarantee universal access to wireless Internet.

Protecting free speech is absolutely necessary; I stand by my earlier statement that certain speech acts (threats against persons and institutions, as well as private companies) should be monitored by an independent federal regulatory organization (perhaps the FCC, or a newly created organization) for safety purposes. However, private ISPs should not in any way, shape, or form play the role of law enforcement.

I'm very optimistic about the new stance the FCC has taken against monopolistic ISPs; it is time to bring the Internet to more people at more affordable rates, and I think the measures the FCC is taking will help facilitate this access. Thank you for sticking up for the people!