

I rely on the Internet as a public platform for free speech, equal opportunity, economic growth and innovation. Without vital Net Neutrality protections, companies like Verizon and Comcast, which have a commercial incentive to limit the free-flowing Web, can decide whether I will have a voice online. The lack of an open internet will result in more situations like wireless text messages: the wireless providers charge an outrageous premium for text messages which cost them virtually nothing. Text messaging was designed to fit within extra capacity in digital cellular networks, yet they cost far more per byte of data than voice calls or even streaming video.

Innovation in technology comes from small and growing companies and individuals, not telephone companies and cable companies. These large gatekeepers essentially have monopoly power in providing access to the Internet to both individual citizens and small businesses. Whether its new protocols or new applications of existing protocols, the telcos/cable cos are not the drivers of innovation. They drag their heels and resist improvements in their networks. Open access to the Internet is important for voice communications (Skype), legally downloading large files like operating systems and applications (via BitTorrents), and access to nonprofit and individual web sites. All of these will be in danger should the telco/cable co agenda be realized at the FCC.

The FCC can't cut private deals that would hand control over the Internet to a few massive phone and cable companies. Any compromise that allows Internet providers to build toll lanes online is not real Net Neutrality. The FCC's meetings with telephone and cable companies must be open--there is no justification for private, "back room" deals with the gatekeepers of Internet access. The FCC appears to favor their speech and desires over the public they are chartered to serve. Big-money cannot be allowed to prevail over a rationed debate over Net Neutrality. The discussion must be in public domain.

The FCC should reclassify broadband data services as a telecommunications service. The FCC's current determination is bad for consumers, citizens, and small business. Today with Verizon's FiOS, phone calls are transmitted over the data lines and mixed with email, television, and Skype, and other data. Its preposterous that somehow the occasional telephone call over these lines is a telecom service, while the other data is an information service. This is not a stock ticker or weather service over a dial up modem. Today's digital phone, cable, and Internet are all telecommunications.

The open use of the internet is dependent on a select few companies: consumers have practically no other choice in accessing the Internet than through these telecom providers. And most are essentially

monopolies or duopolies. They should not have the power to determine fate of consumers, citizens, and small business on the Internet.