

The internet is a public platform for free speech, equal opportunity, economic growth and innovation. Without vital Net Neutrality protections, companies like Verizon, Google and Comcast, which have a commercial incentive to limit the free-flowing Web, can decide whether I will have a voice online. These companies should not have the power to determine my fate on the Internet. What Google and Verizon are proposing is fake Net Neutrality.

1. Under their proposal, there would be no Net Neutrality on wireless networks -- meaning anything goes, from blocking websites and applications to pay-for-priority treatment.
2. Their proposed standard for "non-discrimination" on wired networks is so weak that actions like Comcast's widely denounced blocking of BitTorrent would be allowed.
3. The deal would let ISPs like Verizon -- instead of Internet users like you -- decide which applications deserve the best quality of service. That's not the way the Internet has ever worked, and it threatens to close the door on tomorrow's innovative applications. (If RealPlayer had been favored a few years ago, would we ever have gotten YouTube?)
4. The deal would allow ISPs to effectively split the Internet into "two pipes" -- one of which would be reserved for "managed services," a pay-for-play platform for content and applications. This is the proverbial toll road on the information superhighway, a fast lane reserved for the select few, while the rest of us are stuck on the cyber-equivalent of a winding dirt road.
5. The pact proposes to turn the Federal Communications Commission into a toothless watchdog, left fruitlessly chasing consumer complaints but unable to make rules of its own. Instead, it would leave it up to unaccountable (and almost surely industry-controlled) third parties to decide what the rules should be.

If there's a silver lining in this whole fiasco it's that, last I checked anyway, it wasn't up to Google and Verizon to write the rules. That's why we have Congress and the FCC.

Certainly by now we should have learned -- from AIG, Massey Energy, BP, you name it -- what happens when we let big companies regulate themselves or hope they'll do the right thing.

We need the FCC -- with the backing of Congress and President Obama -- to step and do the hard work of governing. That means restoring the FCC's authority to protect Internet users and safeguarding real Net Neutrality once and for all.

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 agency must stand with the public and protect consumer access to the most important communications medium of our time. The FCC must regain its resolve to protect Net Neutrality on wired and wireless networks. Please reclassify broadband as a "telecommunications service" and keep the Internet open and free of corporate gatekeepers.