

It is time for Americans who want net neutrality to speak up and tell the FCC what it needs, which is to support President Obama's vision of a truly free, not an almost free, internet.

On August 23rd, Verizon's lobbyist Tom Tauke gave a speech at a trade forum sponsored by the Information Technology Industry Council (ITI) where he, according to Free Press, defended his company's recent net neutrality pact with Google.

According to FreePress.net, "Tauke claimed that the two companies proposal fulfills the president's campaign promise of non-discrimination and transparency on the Internet, but the pact," said Free Press, would exclude all wireless internet connections, and would even bar the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) from "having any authority to make and enforce net neutrality rules, instead requiring it to defer to a third-party industry group."

"Verizon is simply dead wrong in claiming their farce of a framework would fulfill President Obama's net neutrality promises," said Free Press research director S. Derek Turner in a statement. "Verizon can't hide the fact that, if enacted, this pact would mark the end of the open Internet era."

"The Google-Verizon deal contains no protections for wireless access, which accounts for nearly one-third of all Internet connections, giving Verizon and other ISPs [internet service providers] the green light to block or degrade content on their wireless networks," added Turner. "In addition, it would allow internet service providers to discriminate online by offering private Internet services alongside those on the 'public' Internet. As a candidate, Obama himself opposed the two-tiered Internet this proposal would create."

"The simple fact is Verizon and Google cooked this scheme to carve up the Internet among themselves and other industry giants because they fear competition on the free and open internet," Turner said in conclusion. "It's up to [FCC] Chairman Genachowski and the FCC, not Verizon or Google, to fulfill President Obama's promises to preserve net neutrality."

Other groups criticized the new talks, as well. Instead of more industry discussions, the FCC should move to pass formal net neutrality rules, said Andrew Jay Schwartzman, senior vice president and policy director at the Media Access Project, in the August 24th edition of CIO in an article by Grant Gross. "FCC chairman Julius Genachowski has pushed for formal net neutrality rules after an appeals court in April struck down the agency's attempt to enforce informal principles after Comcast (CMCSA) slowed customers' access to a peer-to-peer service," Gross wrote.

All somewhat puzzling given this statement by Google's Eric Schmidt way back in 2006:

"The Internet as we know it is facing a serious threat. There's a debate heating up in Washington, DC on something called 'net neutrality' — and it's a debate that's so important Google is asking you to

get involved. We're asking you to take action to protect Internet freedom. In the next few days, the House of Representatives is going to vote on a bill that would fundamentally alter the Internet. That bill, and one that may come up for a key vote in the Senate in the next few weeks, would give the big phone and cable companies the power to pick and choose what you will be able to see and do on the internet.[...]

"Today the Internet is an information highway where anybody â€” no matter how large or small, how traditional or unconventional â€” has equal access. But the phone and cable monopolies, who control almost all Internet access, want the power to choose who gets access to high-speed lanes and whose content gets seen first and fastest. They want to build a two-tiered system and block the on-ramps for those who can't pay."

It would be hard to disagree with what Google said in 2006, although consumer advocates are rightly concerned that in August 2010 Google and Verizon have just drafted a "new policy framework" on net neutrality that would support an "almost free" internet in which wired broadband would be free whereas wireless â€” the real future of the internet â€” would not be free.

According to Anthony Carranza in the Examiner.com, "Among those who strongly criticized this proposal was Senator Al Franken when he summed up that the maneuvers from these major corporations such as Google and Verizon are going to trample the first amendment of the constitution since it would oppress freedom of expression online."

Video from Sen. Franken's talk can be found here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjYpz5TQSIE&feature=player_embedded

It is time for Americans who want net neutrality to speak up and tell the FCC what it needs, which is to support President Obama's vision of a truly free, not an almost free, internet.

On or before September 20, 2010, consumers can file comments on the FCC web site in reference to "WC Docket No. 09-197." According to the FCC, comments may be filed using the Commission's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) or by filing paper copies. Comments may be filed electronically using the Internet by accessing the ECFS.

And remember, those who wish to support a free internet should consider denying the request of internet wireless (i-wireless) to be exempt from (or to "forbear from") the net neutrality freedoms that the rest of the internet would have.

Those who wish an almost free internet, well you know what to do â€” just visit those corporate sites to find out.

