

Former FCC Commissioner Michael Copps Blasts Data Caps: Scarcity-based Broadband

Former FCC commissioner Michael Copps thinks usage caps are all about raking in additional profits while cutting back on upgrades while claiming there is a broadband “shortage.” In remarks published on the Benton Foundation website entitled “**Hoodwinked**,” Copps lets loose on his frustration with the nation’s Internet Service Providers and government regulators who allow them to dictate America’s broadband development:

“Sorry,” the big companies tell us. “You consumers are such data hogs gobbling up the spectrum that we’ve got to ration what you get and charge you more for it.”

While price differentials between those who consume a little data and others who consume a lot may be part of the conversation eventually, we shouldn’t even be considering that at this stage of the game. There is just too much evidence that the big broadband providers operate a scarcity-based plan that works really well for their quarterly reports, but one that would be up-ended if they went out and invested in the increased broadband capacity consumers will need.

Broadband strategist **Blair Levin put it well in a recent speech:** (Upgrading America: Achieving A Strategic Bandwidth Advantage <http://benton.org/node/125790>) “When it comes to the wireline access network, instead of talking about upgrades, we are talking about caps and tiers. Instead of talking about investment for growth, we are talking about harvesting for dividends.”

Make no mistake: America is not going to have the telecommunications infrastructure its future so urgently needs without a national commitment, public as well as private, to increase our broadband performance by orders of magnitude. We cannot harvest our future without planting the seeds for our future. It’s something we need to talk about—before the land goes barren.