

## Our Rights Shouldn't Come With An Expiration Date

The proposed Comcast-Time Warner Cable merger is all about the future of the Internet. The stakes are high, especially in light of the court decision that **struck down the Federal Communications Commission's Net Neutrality rules**.

Comcast has taken advantage of the very real public concerns about the loss of Net Neutrality and tried to paint itself and the merger as saviors of the open Internet — but this couldn't be further from the truth.

It's precisely because Comcast has such a long history of bad behavior that federal regulators included Net Neutrality as a condition of Comcast's 2011 merger with NBCUniversal. Worried about the enormous incentive Comcast would have to prioritize its own content and discriminate against others, regulators decided that the company would have to adhere to Net Neutrality principles until 2018.

As the owner of NBCUniversal, Comcast controls one of the nation's primary news and entertainment companies as well as the primary avenues — broadcast TV stations, cable service and broadband Internet access — for distributing that content. That positions Comcast as a new breed of media gatekeeper over the air, on cable and online. And now it wants to get even bigger.

With Net Neutrality in the news, Comcast has tried to assuage fears and sell its merger by **promising to extend its Net Neutrality commitments** to all Time Warner Cable customers. But like most merger requirements, this commitment comes with an expiration date. In 2018, Comcast will no longer have to abide by Net Neutrality, making this an empty promise.

Net Neutrality has been called the First Amendment of the digital age. It's an engine for innovation, a free economy and freedom of expression. It's fundamental to our rights to assemble and speak online. Net Neutrality is too important to be a bargaining chip in Comcast's business strategy. And it's far too important to come with an expiration date.

Let's not forget that Comcast is public enemy number one when it comes to the open Internet. It **blocked** its own customers' Internet traffic — and then sued the FCC when the agency tried to hold it accountable. And as Comcast's **recent deal with Netflix** shows, Comcast is all too willing to mess with its customers' Internet service to get its way.

So let's settle it here and now. Will Comcast's merger with Time Warner Cable be good for Net Neutrality? No. We should reject the idea that any company can bargain away our rights, and we should **reject this deal**.