

Some of America's deepest core values are freedom of speech and free commerce. Destroying net neutrality and instating the newly proposed rules will undermine both of these positions.

Think of the internet as a library that anyone with a card (internet connection) can go to for information. One day, though, the librarians decide that the patrons who borrow the most books must be charged fees in order to continue receiving information, and in return, they get priority access to materials. Of course, the wealthiest will be able to pay, and will be able to begrudgingly do so. But what about those people who are and were relying on this free resource and cannot afford to pay more? As non-premium patrons, they will be disadvantaged and it may take them extra weeks or months to have the same opportunities as the "premium" patrons. They may not get the information at all, or perhaps they will attempt to pay these costs only to find they are too steep and they cannot afford to continue being a patron of the library, and so cancel their membership. What that parallel will mean in real life is that small businesses and private individuals who cannot afford the premium services may suffer a loss of business as customers choose to utilize big companies who can pay to have faster service; they may eventually fold or have to cede their internet presence because expenses will be too much. In short, this is bad for the economy!

The internet is currently an unrestricted source of information equally accessible to anyone with a connection. Almost everyone relies on it, and it is vital for everything from medical research to education to budding entrepreneurs and global news. It has, in its current state, fostered growth and communication the likes of which no one in times past could have dreamed of: it is, to our modern age, what the printing press was in medieval times. Think of what might have happened if someone tried to stymie Gutenberg's printing press by preventing both his access to the blocks and ink and paper and the access for customers to purchase such things. Would the Bible have become so widespread that even the average person, and not just clergy folk, could own and know a copy? Would the vast majority of people have even become literate? Would Protestantism have even formed? Whether or not you believe in religion is not the point, the point is that the Guttenberg press revolutionized the world and without it we cannot even begin to imagine how different things would be, MUCH like the internet. It is truly impossible to know what the butterfly effect of stifling the internet in such a way could result in.

But let's bring the discussion forward in time and into our own country. Looking back to the 1900s, wealthy and powerful businessmen known as "robber barons" amassed wealth by exploiting practices that were not technically illegal by then-legislature. Currently, we have allowed companies to be considered people, and Comcast is already for all intents and purposes a monopoly. Allowing service providers like Comcast and Verizon gives them even greater power. So effectively, by allowing these new rules to be going forward, we will be creating corporate and electronic robber barons who will have unprecedented opportunity and control. It would be very easy for this power to become exploited. Don't like someone's politics they're preaching? Slow them down. Have a business that sends you extra money for their services on TOP of what they already pay you? Speed them up, and also slow down their competitors, maybe even offer potential customers to those businesses extra incentive to shop with them by cutting a deal. Maybe the ISP's CEO has a moral agenda against birth control, abortion, and information about safe sex, and vastly reduces access/speeds to websites offering vital information to people, or refuses to serve that content entirely! Hospitals in rural communities that have converted large quantities of important patient information to images would be facing extra premiums they'd have to pass on to patrons. Middle and high schools now utilize internet services for research papers, grading, checking for plagiarism, and whole hosts of other things and would be faced with even more financial burdens at a time when the government continues to chip away at their foundation. Control over both the market, free speech, ideas, information: we'd be handing it all over to our ISPs.

The world is watching us now as we make these decisions. We must make the right ones, because what we do will set precedent elsewhere. As a citizen both of the

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United States of America and the greater globe, I'm asking you again, please, support net neutrality.