



Columbia City Councilman Brain Newman Weighs In On Net Neutrality Proposals By Brian Newman

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As a City Councilman and Mayor Pro-Tempore of Columbia, SC, I have humbly served the citizens of Columbia for the last four years. During that time, I have been amazed at the evolution of the Internet and its impact on my constituents' lives. A marvel of technology and innovation, the Internet has become an indispensable piece of civic connection and progress.

Among the benefits that the Internet brings, two stand out to me as particularly important. First, the Internet is an open platform that allows any man or woman to make his or her voice heard. In that sense, it is the ultimate level playing field for both democracy and business. Second, that openness leads to incredible growth and dynamic change, the course of which is wholly unpredictable and leads to limitless possibilities in the near future. Preserving these qualities should be the top priority of policymakers at the Federal Communications Commission. Thankfully, South Carolina's Mignon Clyburn serves on the FCC and is a leader on important telecommunications issues that affect everyday consumers.

FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler has attempted to foster these principles through a reasonable, evenhanded approach to preserving the open Internet. Although the original 2010 Open Internet Order was struck down by the DC Circuit court earlier this year, Chairman Wheeler has done an admirable job of drafting new rules that both ensure Internet openness going forward, while meeting the court's interpretation of the laws. Importantly, Chairman Wheeler's proposal also allows for future adaptability in how the Commission will regulate the Internet, allowing regulators to be flexible when examining future developments in this dynamic marketplace.

Nevertheless, the most vocal opponents of Chairman Wheeler's plans seem to be those with the same priorities that he does: Protecting an open Internet. Their approach, reclassifying broadband services as a utility under Title II of the Telecommunications Act, strikes me as poorly thought-out and unnecessary. Title II regulation will cause far more problems than it solves and harm my constituents in the process.

Title II is an incredibly restrictive measure originally designed for the telephone monopolies of the last century, a marketplace that could not be more different from the Internet of today. It imposes onerous requirements on Internet Service Providers, and could also ensnare industries that are currently lightly or not regulated (rightfully so) by the FCC, such as search engines and content providers.

Fortunately, Chairman Wheeler's proposal would accomplish the same goals while not constricting the future growth of the Internet. The Internet is intimately tied to the future prosperity in this country, and I hope Chairman Wheeler's colleagues rally in support of his common sense regulation. We simply cannot afford to drain the Internet's power by regulating it either too laxly or too strictly. With Chairman

Wheeler's ideas enacted, we will be able to look forward to Internet even richer and more dynamic than today's.