

Telecom giants like AT&T and Verizon Communications have been pressing the FCC for permission to switch off their analog telephone system or as they call it plain old telephone service (POTS) for a newer digital public switched telephone network (PTSN) but without any of the regulatory oversight their copper and analog based phone system had including open access and universal access mandates being applied to the new paradigm. This is wrong and the FCC should not accept such proposals. The regulations that served the public well and fostered competition and innovation in the analog age including the Carterfone ruling that paved the way for the innovation of the fax machine should apply to digital wire-lines including fiber based services like AT&T U-Verse and Verizon FIOS. Also digital VOIP services like Skype and Vonage could be threatened by the incumbents controlling the wires. Unhappy with VOIP services competing with their phone services and making it cheaper and easier to call people over WIFI the telecoms if Net Neutrality is given the axe can use data caps not counted equally to discriminate against such services. They can do this even in the wireless business to discourage people from using Apple's FaceTime for mobile video chats on iPhones and iPads with cellular access (remember FaceTime on iPhone and iPad originally was limited to WIFI and even when Apple opened it up for cellular use AT&T tried to discriminate by requiring a special service plan for FaceTime over cellular calls - the Mobile Share plan).

AT&T forbade unlimited data customers from using FaceTime on its network whether they used 3G or 4G. In fact originally they forbade even tiered users who had Mobile Share from using 3G you had to use 4G which meant Apple's iPhone 4S customers on AT&T's network were out of luck when it came to FaceTime video chat. Comcast also supplies telephone service although a cable company and wants to acquire Time Warner Cable, another cable company offering phone service. Differentiation in Internet services and discrimination should not be permitted. Some suggest prohibiting discrimination against VOIP but allowing movie streaming services to be treated differently may be acceptable - those services use up a lot of bandwidth and for the cable TV providers to require they pay for their bandwidth is acceptable. Never mind the fact cable is trying to do to online video what telecoms are trying to do to online VOIP competitors. Online video anyways uses more data than anything else so why shouldn't online video providers pay ISPs interconnection fees? Comcast argues that Netflix when it would ship DVDs by mail had to pay for U.S. postage so why does it have a problem with paying interconnection online. However, you cannot ban discrimination against VOIP and not ban discrimination against online TV providers. Either we will have an Open non discriminatory Web or we won't. Picking and choosing what online services don't have to pay is unacceptable.

Equality on the Internet will also suffer without Net Neutrality as those who cannot afford to pay will be silenced or otherwise censored. Net Neutrality is also a free speech issue. Recently, a Comcast affiliated news website censored an article about Net Neutrality. Without Network Neutrality the next Google or Facebook will suffer. Instead of competing on the merits of their service and winning customers if their service is good they will only succeed or fail if said startups have the money to pay the ISP's extortion racket. AT&T also wants to acquire DirecTV giving it an even bigger presence in the video distribution market, they may not have announced this deal though if Comcast was not pursuing TWC. The Open Web is a powerful tool for civic engagement and political activism, it is our public commons backed by groups like Creative Commons which provides open source copyrights to protect creative works while allowing fair use, Mozilla Foundation which makes open source software like the Firefox web browser, Free Software Foundation battling companies using DRM which labels such companies as Defective by Design and seeks an Open Web free of corporate control.