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"National View: A free and open Internet for an innovative and competitive economy"

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If you're reading this online, thank net neutrality.

Net neutrality is the principle that all Internet content must be delivered equally. This article shouldn't be transmitted more slowly than another one. Your cat video shouldn't be given priority over a TED Talk. More importantly, your small business's website shouldn't be loaded slower than Amazon's. Put it this way: Net neutrality prevents preferential treatment; it is freedom from interference.

That freedom is crucial to businesses large and small. According to Fast Company, Amazon calculated that just one more second of page loading time could cost \$1.6 billion in sales each year. Amazon could probably handle that loss, but most small businesses probably couldn't, and some might not get off the ground. Imagine if Hulu or Netflix had, in their infancy, been forced to pay high fees or face tortoise-like loading speeds.

So when the Federal Communications Commission released a proposal that would have allowed internet service providers to slow down traffic and charge a fee for higher speeds, small businesses took notice.

My company serves nonprofits " churches, domestic violence groups, educational institutions " groups that cannot afford to pay for faster speeds. Yet without net neutrality, commercially sponsored content would be streamed in no time, while groups like these which are dedicated to helping people could see their speeds slow to a crawl. Our mission is to empower people who do good in the world. This proposal would be devastating to that goal, and the groups we work with.

As many as 4 million people commented on the proposal, with the vast majority supporting net neutrality and less than 1 percent opposed. Business groups like the ***American Sustainable Business Council*** joined in, helping to make the business case for net neutrality: Too many businesses simply can't afford to have their communications slowed.

The FCC should understand that there's a sure-fire way to protect net neutrality: Reclassify broadband to fit under Title II of the Telecommunications Act, thereby giving the FCC the power to ensure that consumers be protected.

The reclassification argument has support from none other than President Obama. "For almost a century," he explained, "our law has recognized that companies who connect you to the world have special obligations not to exploit the monopoly they enjoy. It is common sense that the same philosophy should guide any service that is based on the transmission of information " whether a phone call, or a packet of data."

Small businesses need net neutrality " as does the economy as a whole. We can't have a system where established companies with deeper pockets play by a different set of rules. That runs contrary to the American entrepreneurial spirit. That's why net neutrality has strong support on both sides of the political aisle.

ISPs have argued that reclassifying broadband under Title II will harm consumers " that too much regulation would snuff out investment and innovation, and lead to larger bills. It is understandable that the industry would not want additional regulation. But in reality, reclassification would simply legally enforce the status quo. The Internet now is a place where content gets distributed equally,

without forcing people to pay for the privilege. That's the way it should stay.

Yes, ISPs would lose a potential revenue stream. But, considering ISPs have already created an artificial scarcity in broadband by locking up a large percentage of metropolitan fiber in agreements with municipalities, that's a poor argument.

ISPs in many parts of the country already benefit from a near-total lack of competition, and our Internet speeds are slower " and cost more " than in many other countries. Letting ISPs interfere with traffic will only make matters worse " the Internet that works best is the one that works with the least interference.

We need an Internet that's open and free to all, and we must ensure that all American businesses can remain competitive, both domestically and globally. Covering broadband under Title II may not be ideal, but it's currently our best hope to ensure the Internet remains a place for innovation.

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