

What Is Net Neutrality?

Net Neutrality is the guiding principle that preserves our freedom to communicate on the Internet. Net Neutrality protects the open and nondiscriminatory Internet, guaranteeing a level playing field for all websites and Internet technologies. This openness is the reason the Internet has become a powerful engine for free speech, economic innovation and democratic participation in the 21st century.

Net Neutrality promotes free speech and equality on the Internet.

An open Internet offers all Americans the opportunity to speak for themselves without having to convince large media companies that their voices are worthy of being heard. The Internet also helps people find jobs, get an education, connect to friends and family around the world, get news, access government services, and advocate for social change. Net Neutrality ensures that everyone has the same opportunity to find their voice online.

Net Neutrality ensures that diversity of opinion and content flourishes online, preventing the kind of consolidation that has taken place in radio and television. The Internet provides people with the lowest barrier of entry to establishing an online media presence.

Net Neutrality prevents big companies from picking winners and losers online.

Phone and cable giants like AT&T and Comcast want to undercut competition online, favor their own content and services, and have the ability to discriminate against others. The top executives of nearly every major phone and cable company have told the press and their shareholders that they plan to block or degrade the content and services of their competitors. And they've been caught doing it: In 2007, Comcast blocked lawful file-sharing applications that competed with its video business until the FCC stepped in and forced the company to stop.

Net Neutrality and the digital divide

Some claim that passing a Net Neutrality rule will widen the digital divide. Such arguments rest on the false assumption that Net Neutrality will deter investment by the big phone and cable companies in communities of color and rural and other underserved areas. This is simply untrue. No one should believe that if phone and cable companies were allowed to discriminate, they would reverse their decades-long practice of failing to serve or ignoring the needs of diverse communities. If phone and cable companies wanted to invest in closing the digital divide, they would already have done so.

The main reason broadband costs too much and is out of reach for many Americans is because there's not enough competition and consumer choice — not because of Net Neutrality. Permitting discrimination by abandoning Net Neutrality won't lower prices, but it will mean fewer options and limited access for consumers and diminish the number of diverse and independent voices online.

What's happening in Washington?

This summer, the Senate will vote on what's called a "resolution of disapproval" — a measure that could strip the Federal Communications Commission, the agency that protects the public from abuses of power by media companies, of its ability to protect Internet users. While it adopted some rules to preserve your online freedom, Internet companies watered those rules down. If this resolution passes, any hope for strong Net Neutrality protections will disappear.

What can my member of Congress do?

The path to abuse of our Internet freedom has now been cleared. Phone and cable company executives have openly discussed plans to prioritize certain websites and services over others. This would upend the level playing field that has made the Internet such a powerful engine for free speech, economic opportunity and civic participation. The FCC has the legal authority to re-assert its power and stop the phone and cable companies from dismantling the open Internet. Two million Americans have called on Washington to make Net Neutrality the rule of the road. More than two million Americans have called on Washington to make Net Neutrality the rule of the road. Congress should listen to the public, and vote down any attempt to strip the FCC of its authority to enforce its Net Neutrality rules.

Urge your member of Congress to publicly show his or her support for Net Neutrality by voting "No" on the resolution of disapproval.