

Op-Ed I'm on the FCC. Please stop us from killing net neutrality



Most Americans overwhelmingly want the FCC to keep net neutrality. (Nov. 28, 2017) (Sign up for our free video newsletter here <http://bit.ly/2n6VKPR>)

By **Jessica Rosenworcel**

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Right now, you can go online and connect with friends, watch videos and read the news. There's a good chance you are reading this online right now.

We do much more on the internet than consume content, however. Increasingly, the internet is also where we create. We use online platforms and digital services to develop, share and spread ideas around the corner and around the globe.

This is the open internet experience we all know, and it's a big part of why America's internet economy is the envy of the world.

But this week, the leadership at the Federal Communications Commission put forth a plan to gut the foundation of this openness. They have proposed to end net neutrality, and they are trying to force a vote on their plan on Dec. 14.

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If the idea behind the plan is bad, the process for it has been even worse.

It's a lousy idea. And it deserves a heated response from the millions of Americans who work and create online every day.

Net neutrality is the right to go where you want and do what you want on the internet without your broadband provider getting in the way. It means your broadband provider can't block websites, throttle services or charge you premiums if you want to reach certain online content.

Proponents of wiping out these rules think that by allowing broadband providers more control and the ability to charge for premium access, it will spur investment. This is a dubious proposition.

Wiping out net neutrality would have big consequences. Without it, your broadband provider could carve internet access into fast and slow lanes, favoring the traffic of online platforms that have made special payments and consigning all others to a bumpy road. Your provider would have the power to choose which voices online to amplify and which to censor. The move could affect everything online, including the connections we make and the communities we create.

This is not the internet experience we know today. Americans should prevent the plan from becoming the law of the land.

There is something not right about a few unelected FCC officials making such vast determinations about the future of the internet. I'm not alone in thinking this. More than 22 million people have filed comments with the agency. They overwhelmingly want the FCC to preserve and protect net neutrality.

At the same time, there are real questions about who filed some of the net neutrality comments with the FCC. There are credible allegations that many of the comments were submitted by bots and others using the names of deceased people. What's more, some 50,000 recent consumer complaints appear to have gone missing.

As he announced this week, New York Atty. Gen. Eric Schneiderman has been investigating these apparently fake comments for six months. The Government Accountability Office is also looking into how a denial-of-service attack may have prevented people from getting their thoughts into the official record.

In short, this is a mess. If the idea behind the plan is bad, the process for commenting on it has been even worse.

Before my fellow FCC members vote to dismantle net neutrality, they need to get out from behind their desks and computers and speak to the public directly. The FCC needs to hold hearings around the country to get a better sense of how the public feels about the proposal.

When they do this, they will likely find that, outside of a cadre of high-paid lobbyists and lawyers in Washington, there isn't a constituency that likes this proposal. In fact, the FCC will probably discover that they have angered the public and caused them to question just whom the agency works for.

I think the FCC needs to work for the public, and therefore that this proposal needs to be slowed down and eventually stopped. In the time before the agency votes, anyone who agrees should do something old-fashioned: Make a ruckus.

Reach out to the rest of the FCC now. Tell them they can't take away internet openness without a fight.

Jessica Rosenworcel is a member of the Federal Communications Commission.

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