

## Net Neutrality: Protecting the free and open Internet

### What is net neutrality?

Net neutrality is the First Amendment of the Internet. It's what protects our freedom of expression, and prevents big cable companies like Comcast, Verizon, and AT&T from slowing down, blocking, or censoring the websites we visit.

After receiving almost 4 million comments from Internet users in support of a free and open Internet, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted in favor of strong net neutrality rules in 2015 and the rules went into effect in June of 2015.

### What does violating net neutrality look like?

- Internet service providers (ISPs) could block sites for political reasons.
- ISPs (like Comcast) could make online video sites like Netflix or Youtube slow and unwatchable, to force you to purchase overpriced cable TV.
- ISPs could slow or block sites for profit, requiring sites pay “protection money” to ISPs just to stay in business.
- Your wireless company could block any app for any reason. For example, they might block FaceTime or Snapchat to force you to use their own apps for calls and chat.

**Who supports net neutrality?** Millions of Internet users, the majority of voters from across the political spectrum [1], free speech advocates, tech experts, educators, innovators, small business associations, artists, journalists, startups, entrepreneurs, and human right workers all over the world overwhelmingly support net neutrality principles. Tim Berners Lee, who helped actually invent the World Wide Web as we know it, also supports it.

**Who opposes net neutrality?** Internet service providers like AT&T, Comcast, and Verizon and some politicians in Washington, D.C. -- many of whom have taken massive campaign contributions from the cable and wireless industry.

**Why is net neutrality at risk?** The Trump Administration has signaled many times that they will seek to repeal the FCC's strong net neutrality rules [2]. The possibility of a repeal escalated when President Trump named Ajit Pai, a former Verizon lawyer, chairman of the FCC. Pai is a FCC Commissioner who voted against net neutrality rules in 2015. Now he's meeting with lobbyists from Big Cable and they're moving fast to develop their plan to slash net neutrality.

Join the campaign to protect and defend net neutrality: [www.battleforthenet.com](http://www.battleforthenet.com)

**What can I do about it?** Speaking up for net neutrality at a town hall is perhaps the single most effective thing you can do RIGHT NOW to help sound the alarm. Telling your members of Congress how important strong net neutrality rules are can go a long way in making sure Congress pushes back against the FCC's plan to slash the rules. We need to make sure Congress knows how important the free and open Internet is voters.

**How can I make sure my representatives know it's important to protect Title II net neutrality?** Whether you're able to attend a town hall, visit your representatives at their office, or can submit an email to them, prepare a short question that's backed up by facts, and identify yourself as a constituent. Here's an example:

"Hi, I'm [NAME]. The Federal Communications Commission has been meeting behind closed doors with lobbyists from big cable companies, and say that they are planning to repeal Title II net neutrality protections that prevent companies like Comcast and Verizon from scamming consumers, and blocking, throttling, or otherwise censoring the websites we visit. Net neutrality is an essential protection for freedom of speech. [LAWMAKER NAME], as your constituent, I'd like to know what you plan to do to defend Title II based neutrality rules, which protect our right to a free and open Internet."

#### **Definitions:**

**Federal Communications Commission (FCC):** The independent agency of the U.S. government that is tasked with regulating radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable communications.

**Net Neutrality:** The principle that Internet service providers should enable access to all content and applications regardless of the source, and without favoring or blocking particular products or websites (Google Search).

**Open Internet Order:** The FCC order that established strong net neutrality rules in 2015.

**Title II (*title two*):** Courts were very clear that the FCC only had the power to enact net neutrality rules if they did so under Title II of the Communications Act. Otherwise, the rules would be struck down as previous rules had been. In other words, you can't have FCC net neutrality rules without Title II.

[1]

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/11/12/wonkbook-polling-shows-even-republicans-overwhelmingly-support-net-neutrality/>

[2] <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/30/technology/net-neutrality.html>

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