



Net Neutrality

Congressional Meeting Factsheet

Purpose:

The purpose of this meeting is to lobby your member of Congress to support the FCC's efforts to reclassify broadband.

Why this is important:

The FCC under President Obama has sought to ensure consumers enjoy net neutrality protections.¹ In addition, the FCC released a National Broadband Plan that included ways the FCC will encourage broadband access in low-income and rural communities.

These efforts, however, hit a roadblock recently when a court ruling limited the ways that the FCC can regulate broadband. **Without action, the FCC will lack the appropriate mechanisms to enforce net neutrality** or follow the Broadband Plan.

Fortunately, **the FCC has the power and authority to reclassify broadband**, which would allow it to substantively regulate broadband without running afoul of this court ruling. In fact, the Chair of the FCC, Julius Genachowski, has already announced plans to do so.

The announcement by Genachowski promoted a backlash led by the broadband and telecommunications industry. A letter signed by your member of Congress was part of that. Here's how the New York Times described the letter in an editorial:

Last month, 74 House Democrats sent a letter to the F.C.C.'s chairman, Julius Genachowski, warning him "not to move forward with a

proposal that undermines critically important investment in broadband and the jobs that come with it." Rather than extend its authority over telecommunications networks to broadband under the 1996 Telecommunications Act, they demanded that the F.C.C. wait for Congress to pass specific legislation.

The message parroted views held by AT&T, Comcast and Verizon — the biggest broadband service providers in the country.²

Congressional action is unlikely to solve this problem anytime soon. The large broadband providers have a legion of lobbyists on Capitol Hill who wield enormous amounts of power in Congress. Their strategy is to stop the FCC from taking action and push this fight over to Congress where they know their lobbying can ensure that no net neutrality bill can ever come up for a vote.

The letter your member of Congress signed seeks to convince the FCC to stay in a legal limbo by refraining from reclassifying broadband. This would leave the FCC without the ability to adequately regulate broadband to protect consumers and promote broadband access to low-income and rural communities. **Simply put, if the telecom companies can stop the FCC from reclassifying broadband, net neutrality is effectively over.**

Meanwhile, the broadband companies would be largely allowed to police themselves. And we see how well that's working with BP. This is unacceptable.

¹ Net neutrality means that Internet users, not Internet service providers, should be in control. It ensures that Internet service providers can't speed up, slow down, or block Web content based on its source, ownership, or destination.

² "The Price of Broadband Politics," *New York Times*, June 29, 2010.
<http://nytimes.com/2010/06/30/opinion/30wed2.html>

Tips for your conversation

This is a contentious issue. Your member of Congress has received petition signatures and phone calls criticizing him/her for their stand on this issue. Our pressure is working and it's making some members and their staffs defensive on this issue.

The letter that your representative signed was deceptively written. It says Congress, not FCC, should decide the issue of how broadband should be regulated. While this might seem reasonable, it's a trap. AT&T, Verizon and Comcast support this position because they know that their lobbyists can stop any Net Neutrality bill in Congress.

- Come up with one or two clear sentences to deliver in the meeting demonstrating your support for Net Neutrality and your disappointment in your representative for signing the letter opposing reclassification and FCC efforts to protect Net Neutrality.
- If Congressional staff tell you that your member of Congress does not oppose Net Neutrality, reply that CREDO Mobile, Free Press, and The New York Times editorial staff have all publicly stated that opposition to FCC reclassification of broadband effectively blocks efforts to preserve a free and open access to the Internet.
- If staff tell you that your representative will vote for net neutrality when a bill comes up in Congress, reply that the real fight over Net Neutrality is happening now at the FCC and that opposing reclassification is the same as opposing Net Neutrality.
- Bring with you a copy of the New York Times editorial "The Price of Broadband Politics" which cites the 74 Democrats (including your member!) who signed the letter opposing reclassification as standing in the way of a free and open internet. Click here to read and print the editorial:

<http://nytimes.com/2010/06/30/opinion/30wed2.html>

Find Out More:

The New York Times

Read the June 30, 2010 editorial, "The Price of Broadband Politics"

<http://nytimes.com/2010/06/30/opinion/30wed2.html>

Free Press

Read the June 22, 2010 blog post "The Fate of the Internet. Decided in a Back Room."

<http://www.savetheinternet.com/blog/10/06/22/fate-internet-decided-back-room>

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**Net neutrality is internet freedom.
Keep the internet out of corporate
control.**