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# Fast Facts for Conservatives on Net Neutrality

- Since its birth, the Internet has existed on phone lines which were covered under what are known as "common carrier" regulations, (or "Net Neutrality"), which prevented discrimination by network providers based on content or where a call originated. This principle carried over to the Internet and helped make it a dynamic engine for free expression and economic growth.
- In recent months, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) lifted "net neutrality" regulations off of the Internet, leaving the issue up to Congress to decide. It is currently being debated as part of pending telecommunications legislation.
- **"Net neutrality" policies helped create the most free and fair marketplace in history**, allowing consumers to choose the winners and losers in a competitive marketplace. This resulted in the best ideas, products and services rising to top.
- **Unless Congress acts, it will change drastically - for the worse.** The new regulations will leave consumers with less choice and our economy with less innovation and competition. Without equality of access, such innovation would be diminished at best, or perhaps even begin to move to competing countries in the world economy.
- The new FCC regulations set the cable and phone companies up to become the equivalent of the mafia to the Internet. Today, consumers dictate the evolution of the Internet. **Under the new regulations, cable and phone companies will be making the decisions.** And their decisions will not be made based on quality, but rather on who pays the most "protection money" to be protected from the competition of a truly free marketplace.
- **The Internet currently provides a megaphone for political expression** by virtue of the fact that every site, no matter how obscure, is just as accessible to every individual as any site with a multi-million dollar budget. Every American has the opportunity to create their own site and say what they want to the entire world.

- Conservatives had made many gains in recent years thanks to the power of the Internet. In terms of organization, it has become an indispensable tool. In political communications, it allows us to finally bypass the liberal media and to get our message out more effectively. **These gains must be preserved!**
- Under the new rules, **there is nothing to stop the cable and phone companies from now allowing consumers to have access to speech that they don't support.** What if a cable company with a pro-choice Board of Directors decides that it doesn't like a pro-life organization using its high speed network to encourage pro-life activities? Under the new rules, this could happen - **and it would be legal!**
- Allowing Internet service providers to control what people see and do online would fundamentally undermine the principles that have made the Internet such a success. But such things have already begun to happen. For Example:
  - In 2004, North Carolina ISP Madison River blocked their DSL customers from using any rival web-based phone service (like Vonage, Skype, etc.).
  - In 2005, Canada's telephone giant Telus blocked customers from visiting a website sympathetic to the Telecommunications Workers Union during a labor dispute.
  - In April, Time Warner's AOL blocked all emails that mentioned [www.dearaol.com](http://www.dearaol.com) <sup>[1]</sup> - and advocacy campaign opposing the company's pay-to-send email plan.
- In a time when there is an increasing need to connect citizens with their political system, the Internet has begun to play this role in a big way. Now Congress is on the verge of allowing that newfound energy to be diminished.
- Given that most Americans have just one (or at most, two) companies through which they can get broadband access, the free market principle of competition for consumer dollars doesn't enter the picture, just like the old "Ma-Bell" monopoly. Much like the trade-off involved in allowing a telephone monopoly was that the company had to provide equality of service, so too should it be with the Internet duopoly.
- Consumers that are already paying monthly fees for broadband access will soon find out they don't actually have what they thought they were paying for. **Americans won't have broadband access to the entire Internet, just the part that the cable and phone companies allow them to see.**
- Politicians that are sitting idle and empowering cable and phone monopolies to have power over what consumers can see on the Internet are some of the same politicians that would criticize countries such as China for not allowing its citizens to be exposed to the free market of ideas represented on the web.
- Congress has wisely decided many times in the past to avoid stunting the growth of the Internet via new taxation. **They should follow the same logic in this case and not allow the cable and phone companies to stunt its growth with new fees and content based discrimination.** In the end, the losers will be consumers, businesses and those who use the Internet for political expression.

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**Links:**

[1] <http://www.dearaol.com/>