

THE TRUTH ABOUT NET NEUTRALITY

Why Internet Users Demand Internet Freedom

*Network Neutrality — or “Net Neutrality” for short — is the guiding principle that preserves the free and open Internet. Put simply, Net Neutrality means **no discrimination**. Net Neutrality prevents Internet providers from blocking, slowing or censoring Web content based on its source, ownership or destination.*

The big phone and cable companies that want to control the Internet have been spreading misinformation about Net Neutrality. It's time to separate fact from fiction.

MYTH 1: Net Neutrality means new, heavy-handed government regulations.

REALITY: Net Neutrality protections have been a part of the Internet since its inception.

Net Neutrality supporters are not promoting new regulations but seeking to re-establish the baseline principles of nondiscrimination that protected the free-flowing Internet for decades — until a 2005 FCC decision stripped them away. Net Neutrality supporters are simply trying to repair the damage done by industry lobbyists and restore established safeguards that have made the Internet the greatest engine of economic growth and democratic communication in modern memory.

MYTH 2: Internet blocking will benefit consumers.

REALITY: Network discrimination takes away consumer choice.

Winners and losers on the Web should be chosen by Internet users — based on the merits of their sites or services — and not by the whims of AT&T and Comcast. With Net Neutrality protections out of the way, telephone and cable companies have a strong incentive to distort the free market in favor of their own products and against those of their competitors. In fact, they're already doing it — as evidenced by Comcast's recent blocking of competitive video-sharing applications.

MYTH 3: Net Neutrality inhibits the free market.

REALITY: Discrimination undermines online innovation, investment and competition.

In the words of Internet architect Vint Cerf, the Internet allows “innovation without permission.” This genius made the network an open laboratory for innovators and entrepreneurs. College kids created Google; a hobbyist came up with the idea for eBay; a teenager wrote the code for Instant Messaging. Some of the most popular sites on the Internet right now — MySpace, FaceBook, and YouTube — didn't exist five years ago. This technological revolution will keep turning as long as the Internet remains an unrestricted marketplace of ideas where innovators rise and fall on their own merits.

MYTH 4: Net Neutrality is “a solution in search of a problem.”

REALITY: Since 2005, network operators have explicitly stated their intent to discriminate.

Internet freedom advocates aren't simply imagining a doomsday scenario. The top executives of nearly every major telecom company have stated clearly in the pages of *BusinessWeek*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* that they intend to block or degrade the content and services of their competitors. They're already carrying out these plans: In 2007, Comcast blocked competing file-sharing applications; Verizon blocked text messages sent by NARAL Pro-Choice America to its own members; and AT&T launched plans to filter all Web traffic for possible copyright infringements. The problem is real. The solution is urgent.

continued

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MYTH 5: Net Neutrality prevents phone and cable companies from building out new broadband networks.

REALITY: There is no economic reason why Internet freedom must be sacrificed to connect more people to the Internet.

Companies like AT&T, Comcast and Verizon claim that unless they can erect new online toll roads and filters, they won't be able to invest in the next generation of networks. This is simply ridiculous. These companies already make billions from monthly subscription fees and access rates paid by content producers to get onto networks. Getting rid of Net Neutrality is just their attempt to undercut their competition without investing in infrastructure and services. If the phone and cable companies invested a fraction of the billions they've received in public subsidies and tax breaks, we could already have super-high-speed broadband in every U.S. home.

MYTH 6: Networks must discriminate to contend with "bandwidth hogs" and protect your online experience.

REALITY: Investing in more bandwidth — not filtering — is the best way to address network congestion problems.

While Comcast claims to be only blocking "bandwidth hogs," it is actually shutting down all users of certain file-sharing protocols like BitTorrent. (They even cut off users trying to share the King James Bible.) Instead of outright blocking, network operators can utilize a variety of traffic management tools that do not target specific applications — especially those created by their competitors. Even better, they could actually invest their billion-dollar profits in building more bandwidth to serve the evolving needs of Internet users nationwide. Imagine that: a company building supply to meet demand.

MYTH 7: The free market will solve the problem of blocking and discrimination.

REALITY: There is little to no competition in the broadband marketplace.

Network owners argue that Net Neutrality is unnecessary because competition will deter bad behavior. But cable and DSL now comprise more than 95 percent of the residential broadband market (and a significant portion of the country has only one broadband provider to choose from or none at all). So, if both the cable and phone companies are blocking and discriminating, the consumer is trapped. There is nowhere else to go.

Learn the facts about the struggle for a free and open Internet at SavetheInternet.com.

The SavetheInternet.com Coalition is a grassroots, nonpartisan alliance of hundreds of groups, thousands of bloggers, and nearly two million concerned Americans who have joined together to protect Internet freedom and Net Neutrality. No corporation or political party funds the coalition.

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