

# Net Neutrality & Reclassification

## Background:

Net Neutrality is the basic principle that keeps the Internet free and open. It prevents Internet service providers (ISPs) like AT&T, Comcast, Time Warner Cable and Verizon from blocking, censoring, interfering with or discriminating against Web traffic and content.

The FCC adopted Net Neutrality rules in 2010 but Verizon later sued the agency, arguing that the FCC did not have sufficient authority to enforce its rules. A federal court agreed and in January 2014 struck down the Open Internet Order.

Now the FCC must identify a different legal justification to assert its authority over broadband. The best way to do this is to reclassify high-speed Internet access as a telecommunications service. Doing so would enable the FCC to adopt strong Net Neutrality protections.

## The Problem:

- Without an open Internet, corporations like Verizon can block or slow down anyone's content. In court, Verizon stated that it planned to interfere with Web traffic. All ISPs are now free to pick winners and losers online.
- Organizations and small businesses are at risk of discrimination if ISPs prioritize some websites and services over others.

## This Matters for:

- **People of Color:** The Internet provides a platform for communities of color to speak freely without being silenced. People of color own very few TV and radio stations, leaving the Internet as one of the only places where we can share our stories and experiences.
- **Artists of Color:** Filmmakers, musicians, bloggers and journalists depend on an open Internet as a platform to distribute their work without the filter of a corporate middleman. Many artists of color owe their livelihoods to the open Internet.
- **Small Businesses:** Without an open Internet, corporations have an unfair edge – placing millions of small businesses owned by people of color at a competitive disadvantage.
- **Democracy:** For organizers and activists the Internet is a digital town square, a place where our communities can mobilize to fight for social justice.

## The Solution:

- **FCC:** The Federal Communications Commission must reclassify broadband as a telecommunications service. This will allow the agency to adopt new Net Neutrality rules and ensure the Internet remains open and protected from any further legal challenges.
- **Congress:** Our elected officials can let the FCC know they support reclassification as a way to ensure the Internet remains open.
- **Your Community:** Encourage small businesses, religious leaders and community organizations to send letters urging the FCC to save the open Internet.

## About Voices For Internet Freedom

*The open Internet is essential to the fight for racial justice. This is why Free Press and the Center for Media Justice launched Voices for Internet Freedom in 2010 – to defend the digital rights of people of color. Led in partnership with ColorOfChange and the National Hispanic Media Coalition, Voices is a network of organizations advocating for communities of color in the fight to protect the Internet from corporate and government discrimination. Through coalition building, rapid-response and strategic communications, Voices ensures the Internet remains an open and nondiscriminatory platform for free speech and assembly*

