

Net neutrality and communications law are inextricably intertwined with the fight for racial justice.



WHAT DO THE RULES DO?

The FCC adopted Net Neutrality rules on Feb. 26, 2015, to prevent wireline and wireless broadband providers from:

- Blocking our access to lawful websites and services; and
- Discriminating online by creating paid “fast lanes” for the wealthy while leaving everyone else in the slow lane.

The FCC also voted to reclassify broadband internet access as a telecom service under Title II of the Communications Act, the law that gives the Commission authority to enforce its rules. The rules also provide internet users with due process if Net Neutrality rules are violated, and vest in the FCC the power to protect people against broadband companies’ anti-consumer practices.

Cable and phone companies sued the FCC but a federal court ruled overwhelmingly last year in favor of the FCC’s decision, rejecting every single industry argument.



WHY IS THE FCC’S LEGAL AUTHORITY IMPORTANT FOR BROADBAND AFFORDABILITY AND PRIVACY TOO?

The FCC’s decision to reclassify broadband access as a Title II service re-established the agency’s legal authority to modernize the Lifeline program for the digital age and to protect internet users’ privacy.

Like Net Neutrality, both of these decisions would be in peril if the FCC or Congress decides to repeal the FCC’s authority to oversee broadband providers under Title II.

The FCC’s Lifeline Modernization Order created subsidies for the poor to combat high broadband costs, the primary internet adoption barrier for poor families. The FCC’s Privacy Order protects the privacy of broadband customers’ personal information from cable and phone companies who’d like to sell and use that information themselves.



WHO SUPPORTS NET NEUTRALITY?

More than 100 civil rights and racial justice groups, including:

National Hispanic Media Coalition, 18MillionRising.org, the Media Action Grassroots Network, ColorOfChange.org, Black Lives Matter and Presente.org, called on the FCC to adopt strong Net Neutrality protections and applauded the Commission’s vote.



HAS NET NEUTRALITY HARMED BROADBAND INVESTMENT?

In a word, no.

The aggregate investments made by the country’s largest broadband providers have actually gone up in the two years since the Net Neutrality decision was handed down in early 2015. The largest cable and phone companies have invested a total of more than \$135 billion in that two-year span.



HOW DO WE PROTECT NET NEUTRALITY, PROMOTE INTERNET ACCESS AND PRESERVE PRIVACY?

We stand with over 4 million activists who have spoken out for Net Neutrality.

We oppose any Congressional effort to undermine Net Neutrality or strip the FCC of its authority to enforce fair rules of the road under Title II of the Communications Act. In particular, we oppose bills cloaked in Net Neutrality messaging that actually serve to undermine the policy, and we stand ready to provide legal and factual analysis on all proposed Net Neutrality language.

FACT SHEET

Net neutrality, communications law and racial justice



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"It is because of Net Neutrality rules that the internet is the only communication channel left where Black voices can speak and be heard, produce and consume, on our own terms."

–Patisse Cullors
Co-Creator of #BlackLivesMatter

"If we had the technology, if we had the internet during the movement, we could have done more, much more, to bring people together from all around the country, to organize and work together to build the beloved community. That is why it is so important for us to protect the internet. Every voice matters, and we cannot let the interests of profit silence the voices of those pursuing human dignity."

–U.S. Rep. John Lewis, (D-GA)
Civil Rights Icon