

January 14, 2009

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Preserving the Open Internet, GN Docket No. 09-191

Dear FCC Commissioners,

We, the undersigned, ask you to stand with us in support of the fundamental Internet principle of Network Neutrality. For communities of color and other under-represented groups, the Internet offers a transformative opportunity to build a more equitable media system. It allows all Americans to speak for themselves without having to convince large media companies that their voices are worthy of being heard.

Network Neutrality protects users' choice and equal opportunity on the Internet. It does so by preventing service providers from discriminating against Web sites, content, applications or services that they don't like or that can't afford privileged treatment. This openness is the reason the Internet has driven economic growth and civic participation.

The Internet provides communities of color and other under-represented groups with the lowest barrier of entry of any medium to establishing an online presence or media company. It enables us to speak to the masses without first seeking the approval of a gatekeeper. This will only continue to be possible with strong Network Neutrality rules enforced by the Federal Communications Commission.

Powerful phone and cable companies are trying to gut these basic Network Neutrality protections and to gain more control over the content, applications and services that Internet users can access. If successful, this plan would have dire consequences for communities that are often marginalized by our nation's mainstream media system.

Communities of color and other under-represented groups have long fought for a more diverse and inclusive media system. Discrimination and segregation prevented people of color from obtaining radio or TV licenses when these media were first created. Cable TV promised to be a real alternative for those seeking more diverse programming; it didn't happen that way. Now, many of these very same companies want to control the Internet by selecting the online content, applications and services that Internet users can access.

President Obama has repeatedly spoken out in support of Network Neutrality, which has been the centerpiece of the White House's media and technology agenda. Obama has been joined by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi; House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman; House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers; and dozens of members of the House and Senate. We are encouraged by the strong statements of support for Network Neutrality from FCC Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners Copps and Clyburn. Now we need to finalize the Network Neutrality rules that will safeguard the future of the Internet.

This is an issue of vital and urgent concern to us and our members. As leaders in our communities, we urge you to protect this fundamental Internet freedom that amplifies the vital voices of communities of color and other under-represented groups.

Signed

Afro-Netizen
Chris Rabb

Applied Research Center
Rinku Sen

Boston Youth Organizing Project
Najma Nazyat

Center for Community Change
Garlin Gilchrist II

Clergy Strategic Alliances, LLC
Rev. Romal J. Tune

ColorOfChange.org
James Rucker

Community Change, Inc.
Janet Gillespie

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Kristin Hau'oli Schillinger

Federation of Child Care Centers of Alabama
Tania Lang Burger

Free Press
Ben Scott

Immigrant Freedom Network
Alondra Espejel

Mexican American Advancement Project
Nick Calzoncit

Minnesota JOBS NOW Coalition
Kris Jacobs

National Federation of Community Broadcasters

Carol Pierson

Praxis Project
Makani Themba-Nixon

Press Pass TV
Gabe Mugar

Progressive National Baptist Convention
Rev. Kip Banks

Reflect & Strengthen
Women's Empowerment Collective

Strategic Solutions International, Inc. - Centro Latino de Carreras Profesionales
Raymond-Michael (Raimundo-Miguel) Kornfeind

The Iron Beast
Ireneo Mojica