

Saving the Internet - Power to the People

by Lauren McCauley via dulcie - CommonDreams *Monday, Nov 10 2014, 11:31pm*

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Responding to the call of millions of Americans and years of grassroots campaigning, President Obama on Monday took what net neutrality proponents called a "major step" towards the protection of the Internet by issuing a [statement](#) calling for the safeguarding of "one of the most significant democratizing influences the world has ever known."



Obama's new policy framework calls for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to reclassify the Internet as a utility under Title II of the Telecommunications Act, which would make it subject to public control and regulation, like water and electricity, thus preventing corporate Internet Service Providers, or ISPs, from using their monopoly control to dominate the web.

"The president who promised to take a back seat to no one on net neutrality has finally gotten in the driver's seat," [said](#) Craig Aaron, President and CEO of media watchdog Free Press, in a statement following the White House announcement. "And he may have saved the Internet at the moment it was in the greatest jeopardy."

In the White House statement, Obama wrote: "We cannot allow Internet service providers (ISPs) to restrict the best access or to pick winners and losers in the online marketplace for services and ideas."

"For almost a century, our law has recognized that companies who connect you to the world have special obligations not to exploit the monopoly they enjoy over access in and out of your home or business," the president continued. He emphasized that to extend such protection to the Internet would only be "common sense."

"The time has come for the FCC to recognize that broadband service is of the same importance and must carry the same obligations as so many of the other vital services do," the statement concluded.

Obama's plan comes two months after more than 3.7 million Americans [submitted](#) public comment to the FCC, urging the agency to create real net neutrality protections. Referencing the outcry, the Electronic Frontier Foundation on Monday [wrote](#): "Today, we know the White House heard us."

"President Obama has chosen to stand with the us: the users, the innovators, the creators who depend on an open Internet," EFF continued.

FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler is currently weighing a proposal, which Free Press [dubbed](#) "Fake Net Neutrality," that would allow corporate broadband providers to cut specialized deals with certain companies for Internet "fast lanes," while providing no real legal protection against website discrimination from ISPs.

According to the White House recommendations to the FCC, new Internet guidelines would:

-- No blocking. If a consumer requests access to a website or service, and the content is legal, your ISP should not be permitted to block it. That way, every player — not just those commercially affiliated with an ISP — gets a fair shot at your business.

-- No throttling. Nor should ISPs be able to intentionally slow down some content or speed up others — through a process often called "throttling" — based on the type of service or your ISP's preferences.

-- Increased transparency. The connection between consumers and ISPs — the so-called "last mile" — is not the only place some sites might get special treatment. So, I am also asking the FCC to make full use of the transparency authorities the court recently upheld, and if necessary to apply net neutrality rules to points of interconnection between the ISP and the rest of the Internet.

-- No paid prioritization. Simply put: No service should be stuck in a "slow lane" because it does not pay a fee. That kind of gatekeeping would undermine the level playing field essential to the Internet's growth. So, as I have before, I am asking for an explicit ban on paid prioritization and any other restriction that has a similar effect.

On Monday morning, demonstrators [rallied](#) outside of the FCC Chairman's house holding a banner that read, "Save the Internet," and chanting: "Don't let the Internet die. Time to reclassify!" Last week, demonstrators in over thirty cities across the nation [protested](#) against the proposed hybrid rules, holding their cell phones, tablets, and laptops above their heads "to shine a light on the corruption unfolding in Washington, DC."

Following the White House announcement, Independent Senator Bernie Sanders (Vt.) sent Wheeler a [letter](#) (pdf) acknowledging Obama's "strong statement on net neutrality," and adding: "It is time now for you to stand with the American people and for net neutrality. It is time for you to stand up to the army of Comcast and Verizon lobbyists and institute strong rules to ensure net neutrality."

As the FCC has the final word on the net neutrality debate, advocates say that the "struggle" is not yet over. However, as Craig Aaron of Free Press notes, the president's action "is a major step in the right direction." Aaron continued: "The millions who've fought for an open Internet now will need to defend the president's bold stand against the expected onslaught from Internet service providers and their many lobbyists."

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<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2014/11/10/response-unprecedented-public-outcry-obama-goes-big-net-neutrality>

Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-1339.html>