

'Worse Than One Could Imagine': Commissioner Decries FCC Chair's Attack on Net Neutrality

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"Our message to Pai and companies like AT&T, Comcast, and Verizon is clear: People everywhere will not sit idly by as you destroy the free and open internet." — Mary Alice Crim, Free Press

In an effort to combat the "[mountain of lies](#)" FCC chair Ajit Pai has deployed to justify his newly released [plan](#) to kill net neutrality, Democratic FCC commissioner Mignon Clyburn unveiled a [fact sheet](#) (pdf) on Wednesday aimed at helping Americans understand that Pai's proposals are "[worse than one could imagine](#)" and highlighting their life-or-death implications for the open internet.

The fact sheet, an easily digestible two pages in length, runs through a series of commonly asked and frequently confusing questions surrounding net neutrality: what it is, why it's important, and how Pai's plan would affect the web.

At the most basic level, net neutrality is the principle that "all data and all legal traffic that travels over the internet should be treated equally," Clyburn writes. "This has been a bipartisan bedrock principle for more than a decade."

It is also extremely popular among the public. As Common Dreams [reported](#) in September, 57 percent of Americans "support the current net neutrality regulations that ban ISPs from blocking or discriminating against lawful content on the internet."

But Pai showed little concern for public opinion in announcing the release of his plan on Tuesday, neglecting to [mention](#) the record-breaking number of public comments that poured in against his proposals.

Clyburn's report goes on to ask whether it's true that Pai's plan would really do away with net neutrality, despite the expressed will of the public.

"Yes," Clyburn answers. "It eliminates all prohibitions against blocking and throttling (slowing down) applications by broadband providers, and enables them to engage in paid prioritization and unreasonable discrimination at the point of interconnection. It ignores thousands of consumer complaints and millions of individual comments that ask the FCC to save net neutrality and uphold the principles that all traffic should be created equal."

As for the specifics, Clyburn notes that Pai's plan:

-- "Increases uncertainty for consumers, ensuring that broadband providers could block or throttle at a whim";

-- "Empowers a federal agency that has never enforced net neutrality protections (the FTC) to manage consumer complaints and ensures that there is no FCC recourse for wronged consumers or businesses";

-- "Prevents states and localities from adopting any related consumer protections—an action that is likely unlawful."

The fact sheet closes with a glossary compiled to help American consumers to "decipher the jargon" Pai and his corporate backers use in advocating what critics have described as just "another handout to big business at the expense of consumers."

When Pai invokes phrases like "heavy-handed regulation," for instance, he is really referring to "limited rules to protect consumers and competition that broadband providers do not like," Clyburn notes.

Likewise, Pai's description of current regulations as "unnecessary and likely to inhibit innovation and competition" should be translated to "not financially beneficial to broadband providers."

Clyburn's fact sheet comes as internet defenders are urging a mass revolt against the FCC chair's proposals, which are scheduled for a vote on [December 14](#).

In a [blog post](#) on Wednesday, Mary Alice Crim, engagement and events director for the advocacy group Free Press, outlined seven steps Americans can take "right now to save the internet," including calling members of Congress and [signing up](#) to volunteer with Team Internet, a network that helps "coordinate Internet users from across the nation to pressure Congress locally."

"Our [message](#) to Pai and companies like AT&T, Comcast, and Verizon is clear," Crim concludes: "People everywhere will not sit idly by as you destroy the free and open internet."

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