



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on October 27, 2009

FCC Moves Ahead With Net Neutrality

As of October 22, the five members of the Federal Communications Commission have officially agreed by vote to launch the net neutrality rule-making process.

This begins by opening a door for comments on net neutrality that will close on January 14, 2010. Reply comments have until March 5. Giving a hint at the volume of comments likely to be received, FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski noted that the commission has already accumulated 100,000 pages of comments through 10 previous proceedings.



"The Internet is and has been an open platform and it is that openness — and the extraordinary benefits it has brought for our country — that we seek to preserve through the proceeding we launch today," announced Genachowski. But ranking Republican commissioner Robert McDowell takes more of an "if it isn't broke, don't fix it" attitude.

"Today we do disagree on substance," stated McDowell. "I do not share the majority's view that the Internet is showing breaks and cracks, nor do I believe that the government is the best tool to fix it. I also disagree with the premise that the Commission has the legal authority to regulate Internet network management as proposed." McDowell pointed out that the Internet is probably the "greatest deregulatory success story of all time."

Even proponents of net neutrality have to admit, albeit somewhat grudgingly, that the stakes in the debate warrant paying attention to McDowell's point of view. *Computerworld* published an article on October 26 entitled "[Net Neutrality Foes: What If The 'Bad Guys' Are Right?](#)"

Written by someone who favors net neutrality rules, the author, David Coursey, nonetheless writes: "Proponents describe net neutrality as being right up there with religious freedom, Mom, and apple pie. However, if the FCC decides to make net neutrality the law, that is exactly what it will be: A law intended to protect one set of freedoms at the expense of another."

Coursey continues by saying that "net neutrality rules will trample the free market, supposedly in the name of creating a more free market. The FCC will be making decisions that some say should be made by customers in a free marketplace."

The federal government will be the decider, so to speak, of what is best for the Internet, even if market forces or common sense would say something else. The *Computerworld* article puts it this way:

Before imagining that the FCC is going to solve all problems with a sweep of its magic wand, let me remind you this is the same agency that got us into this mess in the first place.



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Like the way the cellular industry does business, with hardware subsidies, customer lock-in, and exclusive handset deals? That's the FCC's doing, my friend. A clear case of caving-in to an industry the FCC was supposed to regulate on behalf of public interest.

Although Coursey thinks Genachowski is doing a good job, he still cautions that "in considering as important an issue as the future of U.S. telecommunications, we should not rush to judgment. We should also not allow disgust with the status quo to blind us to the gravity of what is being proposed. We need to listen and carefully consider both sides."

For more on net neutrality, see the article and videos available at the John Birch Society website under ["FCC Tackles Net Neutrality Regulation — McCain Responds."](#)

The FCC lists its current net neutrality proceeding as Docket 09-191: "In the Matter of Preserving the Open Internet Broadband Industry Practices." Click [here](#) and follow the FCC's instructions either to file a comment or to get more information. The information available includes a list of recent comments. For an easy way to contact your representative and senators about net neutrality, click [here](#).

Photo of FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski: AP Images



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