



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on October 19, 2009

Internet CEOs Back Net Neutrality

Two dozen chief executives from Internet-based companies dealing with e-commerce, social networking, search engines, and more have signed an October 19 letter to the Federal Communications Commission endorsing net neutrality rules.

The pro-net neutrality group known as the Open Internet Coalition organized the letter-writing effort. The letter was addressed to FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski, and companies such as Amazon, eBay, Google, Twitter, and YouTube all signed onto its pro-net-neutrality message.



“An open Internet fuels a competitive and efficient marketplace, where consumers make the ultimate choices about which products succeed and which fail,” the letter reads. “This allows businesses of all sizes, from the smallest startup to larger corporations, to compete, yielding maximum economic growth and opportunity.”

Net neutrality is the concept that Internet service providers should not be allowed to block, slow down, or interfere with any Internet traffic. This has a nice ring of equality and fairness, though it really just transfers control over the Internet to the federal government by inviting federal regulation of the traffic. If a broadband provider can’t exercise control over heavy users or charge them more for the privilege of using more bandwidth, then all users may suffer slower speeds or pay higher prices to support the heavy users.

Even as these 24 Internet companies came out in favor of net neutrality, a wide range of opponents were making their side of the story known to the FCC. Just last week 90 U.S. legislators signed onto two letters to the FCC, both expressing concern that new regulations would discourage investment in broadband networks. As *PC World* noted on October 19, “One of the letters was signed by 72 Democratic lawmakers, even though Democrats have traditionally supported calls for new net neutrality rules.”

The letter from the Democrats advised the FCC to “carefully consider the full range of consequences that government action may have on network investment. In light of the growth and innovation in new applications that the current [regulatory] regime has enabled, as compared to the limited evidence demonstrating any tangible harm, we would urge you to avoid tentative conclusions which favor government regulation.”

Also, 44 telecommunications companies have questioned if net neutrality rules are needed or desirable. The companies include such big names as Cisco Systems, Alcatel-Lucent, Ericsson, and Nokia.

Even minority groups have come out with their worries that net neutrality regulations could hinder the spread of broadband coverage to locations with high minority populations. A coalition has formed around this concern, and it includes the Hispanic Technology and Telecommunications Partnership, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Asian American Justice



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Center.

So while the 24 Internet companies have made a strong pro-net-neutrality statement in their letter to the FCC, the chorus of concern and opposition against net neutrality is at least as strong. Since net-neutrality trusts in government regulations over free-market forces, it should be viewed warily unless some very compelling need for the federal government to step in can be demonstrated.



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