



## The Beginning of the End of “Net Neutrality”?

In February 2015, FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler pushed a reclassification of the Internet through the rule-making process of the FCC and declared the Net a Title II public utility, introducing the advent of “Net Neutrality.” There was little doubt then — at least among those who were honest enough to say so — that Wheeler was simply following orders from the Obama administration. Now that Obama is gone and Trump occupies the Oval Office, Wheeler’s plan seems to be coming unraveled.



One of those honest enough to call Wheeler out as Obama’s minion was Ajit Pai, who served as a minority Republican member of the FCC until he was appointed by President Trump in January to replace Wheeler as the chairman of the FCC. When Wheeler introduced the new rules for regulating the Internet as a public utility under Title II of the Communications Act, he did so in a voluminous document that was meant to be seen only by commissioners and kept — at least initially — out of the reach of the public. Pai wasted no time decrying the plan as what it was: a “massive intrusion into the Internet economy.” As *The New American* [reported](#) then:

At least one FCC commissioner sees the newly proposed regulations as a real threat to the liberty of Internet users. Commissioner Ajit Pai tweeted a picture of himself (right) holding the plan with a picture of President Obama in the background. His tweet read, “Here is President Obama’s 332-page plan to regulate the Internet. I wish the public could see what’s inside.” He also issued a press release listing several points that call the 332-page secret document into question. His release begins by setting the tone in clear, bold language: “The American people are being misled about President Obama’s plan to regulate the Internet. Last week’s carefully stage-managed rollout was designed to downplay the plan’s massive intrusion into the Internet economy and to shield many critical details from the public. Indeed, Chairman Wheeler has made it clear that he will not release the document to the public even though federal law authorizes him to do so.” Pai then lays out, point by point, why this is bad news for all who value Internet freedom.

Before it was made public, “President Obama’s 332-page plan to regulate the Internet” had swelled to more than 400 pages. *The New American* [reported](#) on what was in those pages and why it was bad for the [Internet](#), [business](#), and [America](#). Of course, by the time the rules were made public, “Net Neutrality” had passed through the rule-making process of the FCC along strictly party lines. As this writer [said](#) of the asinine idea of treating the Internet in the same way as other utilities at the time of “Net Neutrality’s” passage and before the rules were made public:

One problem with this action is that the Internet does not belong in the same category as telephones and televisions. It is “other”: It has its own category. The Internet is the most innovative, pervasive, free, and open form of communication man has ever known. Access to it is more available now than ever before, and an increasing number of people are using it as the primary method for their communications. When used properly, the Internet allows private,



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anonymous communication in a way that is unrivaled. But beyond that, it is also a marketplace, a research network, an alternative news source, and much, much more. And the Internet is all these things because it grew up largely unhindered by government regulation (read: interference).

With the three-to-two vote of unelected bureaucrats unaccountable to the people, that is changing. It is as sure as can be that Net Neutrality will change the Internet. As the Internet is bogged down in regulation by an agency that has no constitutional authority even to exist, let alone to regulate the Internet, the innovation that birthed and nursed the Net to youthful maturity will be replaced by concerns about compliance with regulations. Instead of answering to the concerns of consumers — as is done in a free market — ISPs (Internet Service Providers — through which a company such as Netflix provides services to Internet users) will begin focusing their attention on lobbying the FCC. The result will be an Internet that has lost its youthful energy and is mired in rules that aren't even known yet.

But that was then; this is now.

As is expected of those who serve at the president's pleasure, Wheeler resigned his seat on the commission to be effective with Trump's inauguration. Trump picked Pai — the former underdog fighting against the overreach of government regulation of the Internet — to replace him. In keeping with many of Trump's picks, Pai has done what everyone pretty much expected he would do: He has begun driving a wooden stake through the heart of Internet regulation.

Some of Pai's first actions deal with rolling back those last-minute actions Wheeler had rammed through in the weeks between Trump's election and inauguration. As the *New York Times* lamented in an [article](#) on Sunday:

He [Pai] noted that his predecessor, Tom Wheeler, had rammed through a series of actions right after the presidential election. Many of those efforts, Mr. Pai argued, went beyond the agency's legal authority.

"These last-minute actions, which did not enjoy the support of the majority of commissioners at the time they were taken, should not bind us going forward," Mr. Pai said in a statement released Friday. "Accordingly, they are being revoked."

The *New York Times* quoted Matt Wood, the policy director at the consumer group Free Press, as saying that Pai's actions are "strong-arm tactics" that show Pai's "true stripes." The article also quoted Wood as saying, "The public wants an F.C.C. that helps people. Instead, it got one that does favors for the powerful corporations that its chairman used to work for."

First it should be noted that there is no evidence that Pai is doing any "favors" for "powerful corporations." On the contrary, he is simply undoing an overly burdensome body of regulations that never should have had the opportunity to stifle the Internet in the first place. Wood is hardly an objective source of information on this topic, either. His organization, Free Press (a misnomer if ever there was one), was one of the key players in the "Net Neutrality" scheme. As this writer said in a [previous article](#):

One key player in the plan to hand the keys of the Internet kingdom over to Big Government is Robert McChesney, co-founder of Free Press. Free Press has poured money and effort into pushing the Net Neutrality agenda, claiming it is a matter of freedom. McChesney is being deceptive in his attempt to re-brand his goals. In his article in the *National Review*, John Fund quotes McChesney's interview with the SocialistProject website in 2009: "At the moment, the battle over network



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neutrality is not to completely eliminate the telephone and cable companies. But the ultimate goal is to get rid of the media capitalists in the phone and cable companies and to divest them from control." McChesney is a proud socialist who is "hesitant to say [he's] not a Marxist." His plan for Net Neutrality is anything but neutral; it is about taking over the greatest innovation in communication man has ever known. It is, as Agent O'Brien tells Winston in *1984*, "power entirely for its own sake."

Given both the Marxist goals of the proponents of "Net Neutrality" and the deceptive tactics used to help it gain support, it is also important to note that even though (as stated above) there is no evidence that Pai is doing the bidding of any corporatist masters, it would be the height of hypocrisy for Wood or any other "Net Neutrality" promoter to complain even if it were true. They like that shoe; they just don't like it when they imagine it is on the other foot.



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