

10 THINGS YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT NET NEUTRALITY,

But Were Afraid (or Too Bored) to Ask

1. EVERYONE IS ALL EXCITED ABOUT NET NEUTRALITY...BUT WHAT IS IT?

Network Neutrality means that companies like AT&T, Comcast and Verizon can't block, discriminate against, or interfere with what you send and receive online – including the sites you visit and the applications you use. In 2007, in response to a string of abuses from telephone and cable companies, the Federal Communications Commission adopted network neutrality rules to protect the open Internet– but the court recently struck those rules down.



2. UM....HOW DO INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS DISCRIMINATE? I KNOW, BUT I JUST WANT TO SEE IF YOU KNOW.

In the absence of network neutrality rules, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have the legal right to discriminate. They do this by slowing down content they don't like or cutting sweetheart deals with content providers to cut to the front of the line. This means that, for a hefty fee, those that can afford it will be able to pay for their content to reach audiences in a fast lane, while others are pushed into a slow lane. This pay-to-play scheme is called paid prioritization—and it stands to make already wealthy Internet companies ever richer, while marginalizing our voices.

3. I HEARD PRESIDENT OBAMA SAY THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION SHOULD RECLASSIFY THE INTERNET. WTF DOES THAT MEAN?

Recently, President Obama urged the Federal Communications Commission to adopt the strongest possible net neutrality rules to protect the open Internet. He asked the Commission to reclassify the Internet as a "Title II common carrier service." What that means is that the Internet would be protected as an essential public utility, like electricity or water. Reclassifying the Internet as a common carrier service is the **ONLY** way regulators can ban discrimination online and level the digital playing field for all our voices—that is what a DC circuit court made it clear when it struck down the rules last time.

If the FCC doesn't assert its legal authority using Title II, it risks all of its broadband policies being reversed in court—including those that support rural and low-income broadband adoption, broadband use by small businesses and independent artists, and increasing consumer protection and privacy.

4. BUT, SOME SAY THAT NETWORK NEUTRALITY RULES ARE HEAVY-HANDED REGULATIONS THAT THREATEN BROADBAND INVESTMENT AND ADOPTION IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES. ARE THEY CRAZY?

They aren't crazy (as far as we know), but they most certainly are wrong. Not only did the broadband industry thrive during the period of time when it was subject to Title II rules– over the long term, the FCC cannot adopt key policies to promote broadband deployment and adoption in low-income communities without reclassifying broadband as a Title II common carrier service.

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5. AREN'T PEOPLE OF COLOR OPPOSED TO ACHIEVING NETWORK NEUTRALITY THROUGH RECLASSIFICATION? THAT'S WHAT I HEARD.

Noooooo. Who told you that? Some 20th century civil rights organizations have partnered with their funders in the telecom industry to oppose reclassifying the Internet as a common carrier, and allow corporate gatekeepers. But, a new generation of 21st century grassroots and netroots civil rights organizations and leaders, backed by dozens of members of Congress, have urged the FCC to reclassify broadband.

6. HYBRID CARS ARE AWESOME, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE HYBRID INTERNET RULES BEING CONSIDERED BY THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION?

Because though FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler says he needs to find a way to “split the baby”, to give all sides a little of what they want—it's clear that you can't split the Internet without killing it. The hybrid rules currently being considered by the FCC have little precedent and will likely not to hold up in court. More important is that these rules continue to allow discrimination against consumers like you.

7. BUT... ISN'T RECLASSIFYING THE INTERNET ANOTHER TOP-DOWN POWER GRAB BY DEMOCRATS?

Hahahaha. No. But that's definitely what some fear mongering pundits and politicians want people to think. Four million people, including many conservatives and Republicans, have urged the FCC to reclassify the Internet. Network neutrality is not a partisan thing, it's a free speech thing. Everyone wants rules that ensure their digital voices will be heard, on both sides of the aisle.

8. ME AND MY FRIENDS ONLY GET ONLINE THROUGH A MOBILE PHONE OR TABLET. WOULD THOSE DEVICES BE COVERED UNDER NETWORK NEUTRALITY RULES?

President Obama has urged the FCC to pass network neutrality rules that protect all Internet users equally, whether they access the Internet from a computer, a phone, or a tablet. Chairman Wheeler and Commissioner Clyburn have both said they are committed to equal protection under network neutrality rules—but the current rules being considered by the FCC don't protect mobile users, and neither did the previous rules.

9. ISN'T TITLE II KIND OF OLD SCHOOL? DON'T WE NEED A MORE MODERN APPROACH TO REGULATING THE INTERNET?

The first amendment is kind of old school too, but we'd prefer to keep it. In all seriousness, the FCC has the right to “forbear”, which means it can pick and choose which provisions of Title II will apply to Internet regulation. This will ensure the rules remain flexible and responsive to 21st century conditions. Everybody wins with Title II.

10. SO WHAT CAN I DO RIGHT NOW TO PROTECT MY ONLINE VOICE?

The most important thing you can do right now is place call to the FCC or endorse an advocacy letter. Let them know that you are among the millions that support reclassifying the Internet as a common carrier, to protect Internet Freedom for everyone. Sign up to stay in touch and take action here: <http://mag-net.org/act/open-internet/>