

Denouncing 'Wanton Disregard for Congress and the American People,' Dems Call on Ajit Pai to Come Clean About False FCC Cyberattack

"Lawmakers are rightly demanding answers. But they should also act immediately to overrule Ajit Pai's corrupt gutting of net neutrality."

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Democrats on the House Energy and Commerce Committee are demanding answers after Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai finally admitted last week that—as many cyber experts, [digital rights advocates](#), and members of Congress had long suspected—the claim that the agency's public comment system was targeted by a cyberattack during last year's net neutrality debate [was false](#).

Pai's admission came just ahead of an FCC Inspector General's report which shattered allegations that the system was targeted by multiple "distributed denial-of-service" (DDoS) attacks last summer after television host John Oliver [encouraged](#) his viewers to comment in favor of preserving the regulations, which were [repealed](#) in a party-line vote in December.

BREAKING: Members of the House Energy & Commerce Committee have sent a letter to [@AjitPaiFCC](#) demanding answers about the bogus DDoS attack his agency invented to downplay opposition to his [#NetNeutrality](#) repeal. <https://t.co/rLREQ89eHC> [pic.twitter.com/UtEGGdbWO9](https://t.co/pic.twitter.com/UtEGGdbWO9)

— Fight for the Future (@fightforthefttr) [August 14, 2018](#)

In a [letter](#) (pdf) to the chairman on Tuesday, Democratic Reps. Frank Pallone, Jr. (N.J.), Mike Doyle (Pa.), Jerry McNerney (Calif.), and Debbie Dingell (Mich.) wrote that they were "deeply disturbed" by the IG's findings that "the FCC's system simply was unprepared to handle the volume of pro-net neutrality commenters inspired by John Oliver's report," and that Pai "made a series of misrepresentations to Congress about the event."

Especially considering that Democrats on the committee had requested that Pai provide additional proof of the alleged attacks, the letter states,

"it is troubling that you allowed the public myth created by the FCC to persist and your misrepresentations to remain uncorrected for over a year. ...To the extent that you were aware of the misrepresentations prior to the release of the report and failed to correct them, such actions constitute a wanton

disregard for Congress and the American people.”

The letter also notes that “given the significant media, public, and Congressional attention this alleged cyberattack received for over a year, it is hard to believe that the release of the IG’s report was the first time” that Pai was informed that no attacks occurred. “Such ignorance would signify a dereliction of your duty as head of the FCC,” the letter concludes.

“Therefore, we want to know when you and your staff first learned that the information the Commission shared about the alleged attack was false.”

The Democrats included a list of eight questions with the letter, and requested answers from Pai by Aug. 28. The chairman has not yet publicly responded to the letter, but he is expected to face similar scrutiny from Senate Democrats at an oversight committee hearing scheduled for Thursday.

A so-called cyberattack that disrupted the FCC's public comment system when Ajit Pai announced his plan to repeal [#NetNeutrality](#) wasn't a cyberattack after all: <https://t.co/DsFTMiZEse> Now, Pai will appear before a Senate oversight committee to answer why the FCC lied to Congress pic.twitter.com/6ZM8o4JccN

— Fight for the Future (@fightforthefttr) [August 13, 2018](#)

“His failure to acknowledge and fix a broken FCC comment system—and his vehemence in defending now disproven claims of a DDoS attack—seem part of a larger effort to duck accountability to internet users in his decision to kill net neutrality,” Tim Karr, Free Press’s senior director of strategy and communications, [declared](#) on Twitter.

“Ajit Pai is an embarrassment,” [added](#) Fight for the Future deputy director Evan Greer. “Lawmakers are rightly demanding answers. But they should also act immediately to overrule Ajit Pai’s corrupt gutting of net neutrality, by signing the discharge petition and passing the Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolution to reverse the repeal.”

Although the CRA resolution [passed](#) the Senate in May, so far [only one](#) House Republican has signed on to support the measure. Battle for the Net recently launched a [scoreboard](#) to let constituents know where their lawmakers stand on the matter.

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