

The End of The Internet as we Know It

Obama FCC Expected to Abandon Net Neutrality, Universal Internet

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On Sunday, the [Washington Post reported](#) that the Federal Communications Commission is expected to abandon its pledges to protect Net Neutrality and to ensure universal, affordable broadband. The story cites anonymous insiders confirming that FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski is “leaning toward” siding with the most powerful phone and cable lobbyists on a crucial decision: whether the FCC will have any authority to protect an open Internet and make it available to all.

It is a testament to the phone and cable industry’s overwhelming influence that they [seem to have convinced](#) the nation’s communications agency to swear off authority to protect Americans’ right to open communications. But it is stunning that Genachowski would even contemplate allowing it to stand, given [President Obama’s repeated pledge](#) to ensure fast, affordable, universal Internet broadband for every American.

So what’s going on here?

In early April, a federal appeals court ruled that, based on decisions by the Bush-era FCC, the agency lacks the authority to regulate broadband providers. In so doing, the court effectively handed control of the Internet to companies like Comcast, AT&T and Verizon — allowing them to slow down or block any website, any blog post, any tweet, any outreach by a congressional campaign. The FCC no longer has the power to stop them.

Fortunately, the FCC does have the power to easily fix the problem by “reclassifying” broadband under the law. All it would take is a vote by its five commissioners — and Genachowski already has the votes. But so far, he has done nothing, while proponents of Net Neutrality (the principle that prevents providers from indiscriminately blocking or slowing Internet content) have been watching and waiting with bated breath.

If Genachowski gives up on restoring FCC authority, you can be sure he will claim that Internet deployment remains the signature issue of his FCC and that he can still accomplish the goals outlined in the FCC’s recently released National Broadband Plan.

But unless the FCC puts broadband under what’s called “Title II” of the Telecommunications Act, nearly every broadband-related decision the agency makes from here forward will be aggressively challenged in court, and the [FCC will likely lose](#). The phone and cable companies know this, which is why they’re going all out to keep the FCC from fixing the problem.

The goals of the much-feted [National Broadband Plan](#) are to ensure all Americans can get

high-speed access to the open Internet — not a closed version of the Internet that looks more like cable TV, where phone and cable companies decide what moves fast or not at all.

Chairman Genachowski could stand up for the American people, and against one of the biggest lobbying juggernauts in Washington, but it will take courage. If he fails to stand with the public, it could mean the end of the Internet as we know it.

Before it's too late, we need to make sure the FCC knows the American people are watching, and we will [not sit quietly](#) as the largest companies destroy the open, democratic Internet.

Read [Does Your State Support Net Neutrality? All 50 states ranked by support for net neutrality](#) for further information.

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