

Advocates Plan Legal Action if FCC Repeals Net Neutrality



Summary: On Thursday, the FCC will vote on whether or not to end net neutrality.

On December 14, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is expected to vote on keeping or scrapping net neutrality rules championed by President Barack Obama. To prepare for the vote, net neutrality advocates have said they are readying themselves for a legal battle, according to Reuters.

In 2015, Obama created rules to maintain an open internet, and FCC Chairman Ajit Pai and two Republican commissioners have expressed that they want to end this practice, after only two years.

"Net neutrality" refers to open internet, meaning that service providers such as AT&T or Verizon cannot slow down or block websites or apps that users visit. Advocates to keep net neutrality said that they will fight the FCC decision if the federal agency chooses to repeal Obama's rules.

FCC Chairman Pai was appointed by President Donald Trump, and in his new proposal, he stated that he wanted the internet to be controlled by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission. He said that ending net neutrality rules removes heavy-handed regulation, a statement that ISPs agree with.

ISPs have said that net neutrality rules have restricted investment and innovation and could affect internet pricing. Advocates of net neutrality say that the Obama-era rules protect the internet from ISPs wanting to profit and control an entity that is widely used and currently open.

Public Knowledge, Common Cause and Free Press are three groups that have said they will challenge the FCC in court if net neutrality is overturned. The trade group Internet Association also said they will consider legal options.

Internet Association includes such technology powerhouses as Alphabet (Google), Facebook, and Pandora Media.

The FCC is also attempting to change the classification of ISPs to content providers, a less regulated category. Harold Feld, senior vice president of Public Knowledge, told Reuters that this is not a correct classification. Websites such as Netflix or Google provide content and ISPs are simply means to transporting that information.

"Their (FCC's) description of how the internet service provider works is not true," said Feld.

Net neutrality advocates have also expressed that the FCC's change may punish those who do bad behavior but do not provide any means to prevent it. This is detrimental to small companies who cannot afford to fight big companies such as AT&T.

The FCC's move to end net neutrality has been overall ill-received, and one major player in the FCC office has even come forward to denounce Pai's plan, according to Politico.

"Unfortunately, I realize we do not address that at all," CTO Eric Burger said in an email. "If the ISP is transparent about blocking legal content, there is nothing the [Federal Trade Commission] can do about it unless the FTC determines it was done for anti-competitive reasons. Allowing such blocking is not in the public interest."

- [Obama Makes Stand on Net Neutrality](#)

What do you think of the FCC vote to end net neutrality? Let us know in the comments below.