Net neutrality is based on the concept that Internet service providers should not be able to restrict or place limitations on users’ access (Joch, 2009). In other words, all users and data must be treated equally. While this may sound like a good idea, it is not without controversy, especially here in the United States. There are constant debates occurring between those that favor government enforcement of this idea, and those advocating of free-market approach (Nguyen, 2011).

First, the proponents of net neutrality argue that Internet service providers will use their power to control information that is accessed, and that governments must be involved to prevent this from occurring (Joch, 2009). Second of all, the proponents also argue that despite a subscriber’s financial situation, all customers should be treated equally; certain customers should not receive preferential treatment even if they possess the means to pay the Internet service provider more than others.

Those that oppose net neutrality, on the other hand, argue that Internet service providers should be able to decide which customers get priority. For example, customers performing important tasks such as law enforcement and hospitals should get priority over customers using the Internet for entertainment purposes.

Here in the United States, our economy is based on laissez-faire capitalism, and therefore the population is more suspicious of government involvement of the Internet, and of our daily lives in general. Added to this is the face that laws passed must have both houses of congress and presidential consent. Therefore, the passage of laws calling for government regulations of the Internet faces an uphill battle.

I tend to agree with those that favor a more hands-off approach to handling this perceived problem. The rapid advances in the Internet are largely due to the fact that it is for the most part unregulated. I am leery of giving government the power to dictate how private organizations are run. While it us argued that the status quo may not be perfect, I think that the passage of additional laws may be even more harmful. Net neutrality on the surface sounds like a well-intentioned concept, but there are always unintended consequences to government interference. Given the history of government ineptitude, I would err on the side of exercising caution and restraint.

References:

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