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Protecting Net Neutrality

Net Neutrality is the backbone of the internet. It is like the “basic human rights” of the internet, protecting you and others from the big bad Internet Service Providers. It prevents them from charging you extra to view other sites, or speed up your data transfer for some sites. It also stops them from blocking certain sites that they don't like. In its essence, Net Neutrality extends your human rights to the internet. However, most people do not know what Net Neutrality is, until recently. Ajit Pai, chairman of the FCC, is pushing to repeal the “Obama-era heavy-handed regulation” known as Net Neutrality. Besides the fact that he was a Verizon lawyer, and has a suspicious affiliation with Sinclair, he doesn't seem to have any other reason to want to repeal this, except for one thing: He is good friends with Donald Trump, and only does this because the act was enforced by the Obama Administration. Ajit Pai wants to repeal Net Neutrality simply because his boss doesn't like the past administration, why should that dictate the regulations that affect us all.

What exactly is Net Neutrality? Net Neutrality is the regulation of Internet Service Providers, for the benefit and equal treatment of customers. It prohibits the discrimination of services on a network. To summarize what that actually means, Net Neutrality: Stops the blocking of content, which gives consumers access to any lawful content on the internet, and stops throttling, which slows down your connection to legal content and services, which can have

the same effect as blocking content. Net Neutrality also prevents paid prioritization, which would allow your ISP to determine what you have access to and what you don't, based on anything, like paying the ISP for access to a particular service, the service paying the ISP for a faster connection, or the ISP dislikes that service, so they slow all connections to it. Net Neutrality is a necessity in the ever-growing information-filled thing we call the Internet.

Many of the people who want Net Neutrality to be repealed, often say how it would make internet cheaper for consumers by offsetting the profit of big companies like Google. Even if you ignore the lack of correlation, the lack of regulation is more than likely to lead to premium-esque services, rather than cheaper services. Scenarios like this have happened, and were resolved thanks to Net Neutrality. In the case of Comcast, in 2007, being sued for blocking BitTorrent, a popular peer-to-peer file sharing application. Comcast had been interrupting the packets sent by other users, and adding a “finished sending data” packet to the transfer, causing the speed of the data transfer to be reduced immensely. Because of Net Neutrality, what Comcast did was in fact illegal, and considered discriminatory networking (giving certain services higher or lower priority due to a bias).

One of the arguments used by those who oppose Net Neutrality, is that certain things should take precedence over others. In essence, this can have benefits, like hospitals paying for an “express lane” to get faster speeds. The issue arises when you take into consideration that, in the end, the ISP is still a business, and wants to make as much profit as possible. This can lead to every-day commodities, like Facebook, YouTube, or Reddit, being slowed down or blocked unless you pay extra. And it isn't limited to just those services in particular, any service could be put behind a pay-wall if the ISP deemed it profitable to do so. An after-thought often paired with

that argument is that the ISP would not charge for things like that, because customers would leave. That would be true, if it weren't for the fact that just about all ISPs are a monopoly in their areas. This leaves consumers with no other option for internet. As a result, ISPs tend to be able to charge whatever they want.

The point is, Net Neutrality was, and still is, a necessity. Millions are fighting for it, including the creator of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee, all for their right to a free internet. And not free as in, not paying for internet, free as in, equal treatment among individuals and organizations alike, and no unlawful limitations on what you can see. The internet is a digital archive of information open to all, but it won't be soon; the FCC is pushing to repeal Title II of the Open Internet Act, commonly referred to as Net Neutrality, on December 14, 2017. This is a threat to the basic rights of every American. We must keep the internet free, lest we give up our freedom.

Works Cited

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