

The Seattle Times

Guest: The FCC is stuck in the past when regulating the Internet (Michael Powell)

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Nicklaus: Big, bad broadband is no Ma Bell

Associated Press

Hacker busted for cracking private, government networks did so with ease

Mashable

7 videos to celebrate Sesame Street's 45th anniversary

Bloomberg

CNN stops broadcasting in Russia as Putin tightens media reins

CNN

AT&T cancels plans for in-flight Wi-Fi network



President Obama on Monday called for the government to aggressively regulate Internet service providers such as Verizon and Comcast, treating broadband like a public utility as essential as water, phone service and electricity. Such a move would have a dramatic effect on cable and telecom firms that have fought vigorously to keep their highly profitable Internet businesses free of regulation. This is Obama's most aggressive statement yet in favor of a free and open Internet and against allowing Internet service providers to charge content companies like Netflix for faster access to their customers. The president's statement, released online Monday while he traveled to Asia, calls for the FCC to adopt the strictest rules possible for ensuring so-called net neutrality, or the principle that all Internet traffic should be treated equally. "I believe the FCC should create a new set of rules protecting net neutrality and ensuring that neither the cable company nor the phone company will be able to act as a gatekeeper, restricting what you can do or see online," Obama said in a statement.

The debate comes as government regulators grapple with how to best protect consumers as the Internet becomes more essential to their lives. The FCC received 3.9 million comments on its latest net neutrality proposal, most from consumers asking for protection from "Internet fast lanes." Hundreds of protesters descended on the White House last week and several blocked FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler's driveway this morning as he tried to leave for the office. "I am asking the Federal Communications Commission to answer the call of almost 4 million public comments, and implement the strongest possible rules to protect net neutrality," Obama said. Obama urged Wheeler to "reclassify" ISPs such as Comcast and Verizon under Title II of the Communications Act, giving the agency more power over how the companies operate. Advocates of this approach say that under Title II, the FCC would have substantial powers to prohibit carriers from blocking Web traffic or favoring some services over others. The idea is controversial, but popular among net neutrality advocates who want to ensure that ISPs cannot block or slow Internet traffic to consumers.

Telecom providers such as Verizon oppose the measure and have said that they would fight it in court. The industry quickly pushed back against the White House proposal Monday. "Reclassification under Title II, which for the first time would apply 1930s-era utility regulation to the Internet, would be a radical reversal of course that would in and of itself threaten great harm to an open Internet, competition and innovation. That course will likely also face strong legal challenges and would likely not stand up in court," Verizon said in a statement. Wheeler has said that he is open to using Title II to regulate ISPs as well as other approaches. In a statement Monday, Wheeler said he was "grateful for the input of the president" and that the FCC would "incorporate the President's submission into the

record." "Like the President, I believe that the Internet must remain an open platform for free expression, innovation, and economic growth," Wheeler said. "We both oppose Internet fast lanes."

Net neutrality proponents welcomed Obama's plan. "Obama's statement really gave us everything we wanted," said Kevin Zeese, an advocate for the public interest group Fight for the Future. "I don't think Obama would make this statement thinking that Wheeler isn't going to follow his advice." Obama added that the FCC should extend its net neutrality rules to cellular carriers like T-Mobile and Sprint, a proposal that has drawn resistance from wireless providers in the past. Meredith Attwell Baker, the wireless industry's top lobbyist, said applying Title II-style regulation on cellular providers would be "a gross overreaction."

Obama has long spoken against allowing ISPs to charge Web companies for better, smoother access to consumers. But those statements did not include any specific policy. Monday's announcement marked a significant departure, with Obama endorsing a proposal that goes much further than a middle-ground approach the FCC was said to have been considering. Last month, the Wall Street Journal reported that the FCC was weighing a "hybrid" policy on net neutrality. The compromise attempted to blend elements of Title II-style regulation with the more limited regulations sought by broadband providers.

Legal analysts from both sides quickly pounced on the idea as unworkable, saying it was too exotic a theory to survive a court challenge. The proposal would have split the Internet into two parts. The relationship between an ISP and its customer would constitute one part, while the ISP's relationship with content companies such as Netflix would constitute another. The FCC would then have applied Title II only to the latter part — a partial reclassification. But critics said splitting a communications service this way would be largely unprecedented for the agency, raising questions about whether it would be legally defensible. The stock price of several major broadband providers took a dive after Obama's statement was released. Shares of Comcast and Time Warner Cable were down nearly 4 percent by late morning. — *Washington Post*



127 State Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101
717.214.2000 • bcaps.com

**First in Broadband.
The Future of Broadband.®**