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New Net neutrality rules are “essential” to protect openness on the Web, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler said in a new letter to Congress. “I believe that the Internet must remain an open platform for free expression, innovation, and economic growth,” Wheeler wrote to Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) in a letter dated Dec. 9 and made public this week. “We cannot allow broadband networks to cut special deals to prioritize Internet traffic and harm consumers, competition, and innovation.”

Wheeler's statement comes in response to a letter from Goodlatte expressing support for the idea that existing antitrust laws can achieve the same goals as new Net neutrality rules. “Strong enforcement of the antitrust laws can prevent dominant Internet service providers from discriminating against competitors' content or engaging in anticompetitive pricing practices,” Goodlatte, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, wrote to the FCC last month. “Antitrust law prosecutes conduct once it occurs, by determining on a case-by-case basis whether parties actually engaged in improper conduct,” the lawmaker added. “Regulation, by contrast, is a blunt, 'one size fits all' approach that creates a burden on all regulated parties.”

Goodlatte has [expressed similar views](#) in the past, including at a Congressional hearing this summer. Wheeler responded last week that Net neutrality rules “can work in tandem with antitrust law” to promote open Internet principles. “There has been a decade of consistent action by the Commission to protect and promote the Internet as an open platform for innovation, competition, economic growth, and free expression,” Wheeler wrote. “At the core of all of these Commission efforts has been a view endorsed by four Chairmen and a majority of the Commission's members in office during that time: that FCC oversight is essential to protect the openness that is critical to the Internet's success.”

The FCC pass Net neutrality rules in 2010, but those regulations were struck down in January by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. Since then, the agency has been trying to craft new broadband regulations that will hold up in court. Earlier this year, Wheeler proposed a set of controversial rules that would prohibit broadband providers from blocking or degrading material, but would allow them to charge companies extra fees for faster delivery.

That proposal drew criticism from many net neutrality proponents, who say that the FCC should also ban paid fast lanes. Last month, President Barack Obama publicly

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urged the FCC to ban paid prioritization deals. The FCC is expected to vote on the issue early next year. – *Media Post*

A restructuring of base dial-tone rates by Verizon Pennsylvania will cause monthly bills to rise by up to a dollar for some landline customers, and to fall by 13 cents for others. The state Public Utility Commission on Thursday approved an annual rate change for the phone company that will bring in about \$2 million.

Verizon used the opportunity to set the dial tone rate at the same price for all customers — \$8.88 per month — instead of four tiers depending on how close customers live to urban centers. Bills for residential customers in urban areas will rise 95 cents next month. Those in rural areas will get a decrease. The PUC said it received no objections to the rate change, though Commissioner James Cawley filed a dissenting opinion. – *Associated Press*



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