

Tell Congress to Restore Net Neutrality to Help Close the Rural Digital Divide

In 2018, the internet touches nearly every aspect of American life. And yet, **39 percent of rural Americans don't have access to quality broadband**. The rural digital divide is keeping hard working Americans from participating in and growing the digital economy.

Farmers are the lifeblood of our country's food supply, and they rely on fast internet connections to run machinery in the field; track weather, insects, and diseases; and keep abreast of market prices for their crops. Farming families also rely on the internet for news, to communicate with friends and family, to complete homework, and for numerous other uses.

Though some fortunate farmers and rural Americans have internet access, it can be unreliable. **Strong net neutrality protections are critical to ensure Internet Service Providers (ISPs) don't block websites or applications or slow down web traffic -- practices that would make rural broadband connections even less reliable and deepen the already troubling digital and economic divide between rural and urban America.**

No Net Neutrality Means Higher Internet Prices for Rural Families

- In 2015, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted net neutrality rules to stop ISPs from blocking and slowing down traffic subscribers want, or setting up pay-to-play schemes that would harm small businesses and new firms and increase costs for internet users.
- In December 2017, the FCC repealed its net neutrality protections. As a result, rural families could face higher prices for internet access and increased obstacles to accessing the online sites, products, and services they want.
- Small internet providers that tend to serve rural communities are now likely to be charged higher prices by the largest ISPs (like AT&T and Comcast) to "interconnect" -- or connect the local network to the global internet. Those costs will be passed on to customers.
- Mobile ISPs can prioritize traffic to specific brands of internet-connected agricultural machinery and block or slow access to other equipment entirely. Farmers would be

entirely at the mercy of the business arrangements made by ISPs and large equipment manufacturers.

- Rural communities and small ISPs shouldn't be forced to pay higher prices because they're held hostage by the largest, monopoly cable and telephone companies.
- But as it stands, the FCC is refusing to ensure rural families who need reliable, affordable internet access get a fair shake.

No Free Market Online Without Net Neutrality

- In small towns and rural areas, high speed internet access provides new economic opportunities for small local businesses to be part of the digital economy and connects local businesses to the global marketplace.
- Net neutrality protections would ensure a free market and a level playing field online so businesses in every city and town can reach customers anywhere in the world.
- The FCC's decision to eliminate net neutrality protections endangers the free market that allows small firms to grow online. Due to the FCC's recent decision, the largest national and international firms can pay-to-play in order to speed up and prioritize customer access to their websites, and slow down or block access to competitors.
- Small businesses in small towns across America are in the crosshairs and stand to be the biggest losers when ISPs start to pick winners and losers in the digital economy.

Tell Congress to Restore Strong, Sensible Net Neutrality Protections

- The fight is not over! Congress has a tool called the Congressional Review Act (CRA) that allows Congress to override agency rules like the FCC repeal of net neutrality.
- The FCC's net neutrality rules were popular, working well for the internet economy, and upheld in court twice.
- Polling shows more than 8-in-10 voters oppose the FCC's action and want to keep net neutrality.
- In just a few weeks, 50 Senators and more than 130 Representatives have already indicated they will vote for a CRA to restore net neutrality.
- **Urge your Senators and Representatives to support the CRA in order to restore strong net neutrality protections. Make sure your members of Congress protect your interests!**

Visit Public Knowledge at:

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to take action to protect rural communities and fight the digital divide!