



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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STATEMENT BY FCC CHAIRMAN TOM WHEELER ON BROADBAND CONSUMERS AND INTERNET CONGESTION

Washington, D.C. – FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler issued the following statement today:

“For some time now we have been talking about protecting Internet consumers. At the heart of this is whether Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that provide connectivity in the final mile to the home can advantage or disadvantage content providers, and therefore advantage or disadvantage consumers. What we call the Open Internet rule on which we are currently seeking comment is one component of this. If adopted, the new rule would prohibit bad acts such as blocking content or degrading access to content. This kind of activity within an ISP’s network has traditionally been the focus of net neutrality. But there is another area of Internet access, and that is the exchange of traffic between ISPs and other networks and services. The recent disputes between Netflix and ISPs such as Comcast and Verizon have highlighted this issue.

“In reading the emails I receive, I thought this one from George pretty well sums up public concern:

Netflix versus Verizon: Is Verizon abusing Net Neutrality and causing Netflix picture quality to be degraded by “throttling” transmission speeds? Who is at fault here? The consumer is the one suffering! What can you do?

“We don’t know the answers and we are not suggesting that any company is at fault. But George has gone to the heart of the matter: what is going on and what can the FCC do on behalf of consumers? Consumers pay their ISP and they pay content providers like Hulu, Netflix or Amazon. Then when they don’t get good service they wonder what is going on. I have experienced these problems myself and know how exasperating it can be.

“Consumers must get what they pay for. As the consumer’s representative we need to know what is going on. I have therefore directed the Commission staff to obtain the information we need to understand precisely what is happening in order to understand whether consumers are being harmed. Recently, at my direction, Commission staff has begun requesting information from ISPs and content providers. We have received the agreements between Comcast and Netflix and Verizon and Netflix. We are currently in the process of asking for others.

“To be clear, what we are doing right now is collecting information, not regulating. We are looking under the hood. Consumers want transparency. They want answers. And so do I.

“The bottom line is that consumers need to understand what is occurring when the Internet service they’ve paid for does not adequately deliver the content they desire, especially content they’ve also paid

for. In this instance, it is about what happens where the ISP connects to the Internet. It's important that we know – and that consumers know.”

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