

Q&A One-Pager on Net Neutrality

Doesn't the Internet already have tiers?

- Yes. Consumers have long been able to choose from a variety of Internet access tiers: dial-up, the “slow lane;” different speeds and prices of broadband, the “fast lanes;” or WiFi access, the often “free” lane.
- Internet backbone businesses have long “peered” differently with tiers based on size and bandwidth.

Are all bits treated equally on the Internet today?

- No. For a variety of legitimate reasons internet traffic is treated differently. *Economics/competition:* People pay for different speeds based on their individual needs and means. *Law enforcement/public safety:* Need to be able to treat bits differently to prioritize for 911 and first responders. *Network security/quality of service:* Networks block spam and viruses; manage bandwidth to guarantee service.

Are all websites treated equally today?

- No. It is common industry practice for search engines to give preferential treatment in search results to websites or “sponsored links” that pay them the most money for top placement. That's competition.

Is there sufficient broadband competition?

- Yes. Competition is flourishing and increasing. In addition to cable modems, DSL, WiFi and satellite broadband, there are increasingly, 3-5 wireless broadband options and broadband over power lines.
- Faster/cheaper microchips continue to drive the increasing number of broadband access alternatives.

Is net neutrality -- neutral?

- No. There's nothing neutral about the government: dictating one and only one way to design networks; creating an innovation double standard where innovation *at the edge* of the network is encouraged but discouraged *inside* the network; or rigging the game by picking winners before the game is played.

Would net neutrality discourage innovation?

- Yes. In truly Orwellian logic, net neutrality proposes that the only way to protect innovation is to restrict it. Innovation is all about being different, the freedom to be different. Net neutrality mandates sameness.

Would net neutrality reverse current Congressional policy toward the Internet?

- Yes, Congress's current policy for the Internet is “*to preserve the vibrant and competitive free market that presently exists for the Internet...unfettered by Federal or state regulation.*”

Would net neutrality reverse the competition purpose of the 1996 Telecom Act?

- Yes. In choosing regulation to promote technology innovation at the edge of the network, net neutrality would reverse the successful purpose of the 1996 Telecom Act which is: “*to promote competition and reduce regulation...to encourage the rapid deployment of telecommunications technologies.*”

Are there potential unintended consequences from net neutrality?

- Yes. Sweeping and rigid net neutrality legislation could: hinder public safety and homeland security; complicate protecting Americans privacy; erode the quality and responsiveness of the Internet; limit consumers' competitive choices; and discourage investment in broadband deployment to all Americans.

NETCompetition.org is an e-forum to promote a rigorous debate on the merits of net neutrality legislation. It is funded by a wide range of broadband telecom, cable and wireless companies who believe that the best way to guard a free and open Internet is free and open competition, not more government control of the Internet. Please see www.netcompetition.org for more information.