

Opening Statement
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “Legislating to Safeguard the Free and Open Internet:”
March 12, 2019

Words like “net neutrality” and “open internet” don’t capture how central this issue is for our society. We are talking about what the country stands for. We are talking about saving economic opportunity and innovation, saving our kid’s educational opportunities, and saving our democracy. It is that important. Without net neutrality – a free and open internet simply does not exist.

We’ve all heard the fears of our constituents. In my district, small businesses like Rockstar Bakery and Second Life Bikes in Asbury Park are concerned that without net neutrality their businesses could be blocked from reaching their customers. They worry large corporations could buy “fast lanes,” which would make their businesses less competitive.

Conservatives and liberals alike worry about their voices being shut down by corporations that don’t agree with their point of view.

And without access to a free and open internet, my constituents are worried it would be harder to find a job, harder to get the training they need, and harder for their kids to keep up at school. After all, today, people need the internet to find good paying jobs and to prepare their children to succeed in life.

A free and open internet isn’t just about making sure that we can watch videos on our computers or our phones. It is much more than that. It is about protecting free speech, commerce, creativity, and innovation.

That is why it’s sad that we even have to hold this hearing on legislating to safeguard the internet. The FCC’s order in 2015 establishing strong net neutrality rules was upheld twice in federal court. The debate about net neutrality was over. Consumers and small businesses were protected. But the Trump FCC defied the American people and rolled back those common-sense protections.

It didn’t matter that polling showed 86 percent of Americans supported these protections. Nor did it matter that a historic 24 million people commented on their action, the overwhelming majority in opposition.

And that is why this Committee must act. The Save the Internet Act will restore the meaningful net neutrality protections Americans want. It will stop this FCC or a future FCC from undermining free speech, small businesses, and consumers.

We must act swiftly. There is no time for delay. Without net neutrality, we’re already seeing the slow march of anti-consumer behavior. ISPs are charging internet users more for using their smart phone’s internet connection on another device. In other instances, they are charging

consumers more for watching high definition videos. This is not what a free and open internet looks like.

That's why I am thrilled so many of my colleagues have joined with Chairman Doyle in signing on as original cosponsors of this legislation. After unveiling the Save the Internet Act last Wednesday, the bill was introduced with 132 original co-sponsors.

The Save the Internet Act will bring back the FCC's commonplace, bedrock principles. It will put a cop on the beat at the FCC and protect Americans and small businesses from abusive and discriminatory network practices.