

NET NEUTRALITY

On December 14, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted 3-2 to scuttle a 2015 Obama rule known as "net neutrality". Basically, that means that Broadband Internet providers would be able to set fees according to the speed of network service. The word 'neutrality' means that the Internet is not preferential where everyone should have access equally. What does it mean to rural America? That depends on whom you ask.

Proponents call the 'net neutrality' rule *"a heavy-handed framework which imposed substantial costs on the entire Internet ecosystem. The framework adopted by the Commission will protect consumers at far less cost to investment than the prior rigid and wide ranging utility rules. And restoring a favorable climate for network investment is key to closing the digital divide, spurring competition and innovation that benefits consumers."*

Opponents of scrapping the 'net neutrality' rule such as Obama-appointed FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn do not mince words: *"The large majority of Americans are in favor of keeping strong net neutrality rules in place. The sad thing about this commentary is the new norm at the FCC: Ignoring the will of the people, a majority that will stand idly by while the people they are committed to serve lose. Sole proprietors, whose entire business model, depends on an open internet, are worried that the absence of clear and enforceable net neutrality protections will result in higher costs and fewer benefits because you see: they are not able to pay tolls for premium access. There is a fallacy underlying the (FCC's) actions and rhetoric: the assumption of what is best for broadband providers is best for America."*

So, one view is that there will be more investment which will expand Broadband Internet services to rural areas to end the digital divide. The other is that underserved areas will be left with minimal service, if that, versus those with deep pockets who can pay more. Given the importance of Broadband Internet in today's world, this is an issue you should know a bit about.

Following are some resources:

- www.fcc.gov Federal Communications Commission (Docket 17-108)
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<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-will-rolling-back-net-neutrality-affect-consumers-youll-have-to-read-the-fine-print>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/14/570526390/fcc-repeals-net-neutrality-rules-for-internet-providers>