

Comments on Internet Neutrality (December 7, 2017)

RE: Indiana Library Federation Comments on the Federal Communications Commission Proposed Declaratory Ruling, Report and Order in WC Docket 17-108 on internet neutrality, or net neutrality¹.

Net neutrality is the principle that internet service providers (ISPs) must enable access to all content and applications regardless of the source and without favoring or blocking specific services or websites. Strong net neutrality rules are critical to the functioning of modern libraries because we rely on the internet to collect, create and disseminate essential online information and services to the public.

Background: In 1996, President Clinton and a Republican Congress established policy of the United States “to preserve the vibrant and competitive free market that presently exists for the Internet . . . unfettered by Federal or State regulation.”

In 2015, the Federal Communications Commission issued an order that recognized the internet as a utility and imposed regulations to require service providers to treat all internet traffic and services equally.

Earlier this year, Chairman Ajit Pai of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proposed an order that would essentially reverse the 2015 order.

- **Proponents of internet neutrality**, including people in the library, technology, education and consumer protection communities, *argue that the internet has become a critical utility, which requires basic rules and regulations to ensure equal access to information and services*. They further argue that reversing the 2015 rules would result in higher rates for many, discrimination over content, degradation of service and a threat to education, research, learning and the unimpeded flow of information.
- **Opponents of internet neutrality**, including many in the telecommunications industry and advocates of unregulated markets, *argue that broadband investment has slowed as a result of the 2015 order and increased regulations*. They further argue that the Declaratory Ruling, Report and Order would result in more jobs, increased competition and better, faster cheaper internet access, especially for those in rural areas.

Our position: Indiana Library Federation stands by the principle that internet traffic should be treated equally. Strong net neutrality rules are critical to the functioning of modern libraries because we rely on the internet to collect, create and disseminate essential online information and services to the public. Internet neutrality policies help ensure the internet will remain open to free speech, research, education and innovation.

We further advocate for expanding broadband access for all residents. Access to high-speed internet is critical for student success, for skilling up in employment through online training or distance education, for finding and applying for jobs, for completing government transactions and for participating in the modern economy.

¹ http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2017/db1122/DOC-347927A1.pdf

Indiana Library Federation leads, educates and advocates to advance library services for the benefit of Indiana residents.