



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

October 17, 2014

The Honorable Louise Slaughter
U.S. House of Representatives
2469 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Slaughter:

Thank you for your letter about the need for the Commission to restore rules to protect the Open Internet. I share your concerns. Since the D.C. Circuit's decision in January, there are no rules in place to prevent a broadband provider from engaging in conduct harmful to Internet openness, such as blocking a consumer from accessing a requested website or degrading the performance of an innovative Internet application. The Open Internet is too important to leave consumers and innovators unprotected. We must reinstate strong, enforceable Open Internet rules, and we must do so with dispatch.

As you know, in May, the Commission adopted a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* ("Notice") to begin that process. We asked a fundamental question: What is the right public policy to ensure that the Internet remains open? And we sought comment on the best way to achieve that fundamental policy goal. The response has been remarkable: Over 3.7 million comments were filed by the close of the comment period on September 15, 2014. This record-setting level of public engagement reflects the vital nature of Internet openness and the importance of our getting the answer right in this proceeding.

Your letter touches on key issues in the *Notice*, and it will be included in the record and considered as a part of the Commission's review. You call on the FCC to ensure that "the Internet does not become the bastion of powerful incumbents and carriers, but rather remains a place where all speakers, creators, and innovators can harness its power now and in the future." I wholeheartedly agree. The purpose of our Open Internet rules will be to protect and promote the Open Internet, including eliminating discrimination that harms consumers, competition, and free expression. You also raise concerns about "[e]recting toll booths or designating fast lanes on the information superhighway." Here, too, we agree. I have repeatedly stated my opposition to "fast lanes" that degrade the quality of the consumer's experience or create an artificial structure that interferes with the virtuous cycle of the Internet ecosystem. With concerns like these in mind, our *Notice* expressly asks whether and how the Commission can prohibit or presume illegal paid prioritization practices, consistent with our authority.

With respect to your concerns about the legal foundation for our rules, the Commission is considering several options, including Section 706 and Title II of the Communications Act. The *Notice* specifically asks questions about these approaches, including whether the Commission should revisit its classification of broadband service as an information service or whether we

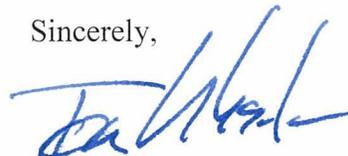
should separately identify and classify under Title II a service that “broadband providers... furnish to edge providers.” For approaches involving a Title II classification, we also ask about how our forbearance authority should be used to tailor Title II obligations to achieve our public policy goals. Since the *Notice*, record filings by some parties – such as AOL, Mozilla, the Center for Democracy and Technology, a coalition of library and higher education associations, Rep. Henry Waxman, and others – have suggested additional approaches that would combine aspects of both our Section 706 and Title II authority. We are looking closely at these approaches as well. This reflects what I have said many times, most recently before the House Committee on Small Business: All options remain on the table, including Title II.

You also urge the adoption of Open Internet rules that apply to points of interconnection, as well as the last mile, and to mobile broadband in the same ways as fixed. Our *Notice* asked questions about whether changes in Internet ecosystem should lead the Commission to revisit and expand the scope of the 2010 rules in these ways. In addition, we held separate Open Internet Roundtable discussions on September 16, 2014, focused on the scope of our Open Internet rules and whether and how they should apply to mobile broadband, including the application of reasonable network management to wireless technologies.

Our *Notice*, of course, is just the beginning. In addition to our Roundtable discussions on the scope of the rules and mobile issues, I was also pleased to participate in Roundtable discussions about how to tailor our rules to achieve our policy goals, enforcement, technology, economic theory, and, most recently, legal authority. Through these events, we have heard views of experts on all sides of the issue, along with real-time input from the public. At the same time, a cross-Commission staff team is hard at work reviewing the many comments filed over the last four months. Our efforts will ensure that all views are taken into account as the Commission looks to adopt sustainable rules that achieve our shared Open Internet goals.

From the outset of this critically important undertaking, I have been and remain committed to exercising the Commission’s authority, as needed, to ensure the Internet remains free and open for decades to come. I look forward to continued engagement with you as the proceeding moves forward to a successful conclusion.

Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler