

15 October 2009

Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC
Via email

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We appreciate the opportunity to send you this letter. As individuals who have worked on the Internet and its predecessors continuously beginning in the late 1960s, we are very concerned that access to the Internet be both open and robust. We are very pleased by your recent proposal to initiate a proceeding for the consideration of safeguards to that end.

In particular, we believe that your network neutrality proposal's key principles of "nondiscrimination" and "transparency" are necessary components of a pro-innovation public policy agenda for this nation. This initiative is both timely and necessary, and we look forward to a data-driven, on-the-record proceeding to consider all of the various options.

We understand that your proposal, while not even yet part of a public proceeding, already is meeting with strong and vocal resistance from some of the organizations that the American public depends upon for broadband access to the Internet. As you know, the debate on this topic has been lengthy, and many parties opposing the concept have systematically mischaracterized the views of those who endorse and support your position.

We believe that the existing Internet access landscape in the U.S. provides inadequate choices to discipline the market through facilities-based competition alone. Your network neutrality proposals will help protect U.S. Internet users' choices for and freedom to access all available Internet services, worldwide, while still providing for responsible network operation and management practices, including appropriate privacy-preserving protections against denial of service and other attacks.

One persistent myth is that "network neutrality" somehow requires that all packets be treated identically, that no prioritization or quality of service is permitted under such a framework, and that network neutrality would forbid charging users higher fees for faster speed circuits. To the contrary, we believe such features are permitted within a "network neutral" framework, so long they are not applied in an anti-competitive fashion.

We believe that the vast numbers of innovative Internet applications over the last decade are a direct consequence of an open and freely accessible Internet. Many now-successful companies have deployed their services on the Internet without the need to negotiate special arrangements with Internet Service Providers, and it's crucial that future innovators have the same opportunity. We are advocates for "permissionless innovation" that does not impede entrepreneurial enterprise.

We commend your initiative to protect and maintain the Internet's unique openness, and support the FCC process for considering the adoption of your proposed nondiscrimination and transparency principles.

Respectfully,

Vinton G. Cerf, Internet Pioneer
Stephen D. Crocker, Internet Pioneer
David P. Reed, Internet Pioneer
Lauren Weinstein, Internet Pioneer
Daniel Lynch, Internet Pioneer