

Net Neutrality and Interconnection

The Importance of Thoughtful and Carefully Calibrated "Open Internet" Rules

Commitment to Customer Experience

NTCA's small business members have long focused on ensuring that their rural neighbors have access to robust and affordable broadband. These community-based operators are further committed to making certain that customers receive what they are expecting when they sign up for broadband services and to protecting the privacy of consumers using those services. In addition, NTCA has long advocated for common-sense rules to ensure that the networks that underpin those services interconnect seamlessly in fulfilling such consumer demands and expectations.

Court Decision

In January 2025, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit overturned the FCC's net neutrality order. NTCA has long expressed concern about the application of expansive regulatory regimes to broadband internet access services. We have consistently urged the FCC to address broadband-related public interest goals through carefully tailored policies that are consistent with statutory frameworks, and we have noted that such policies must account for an online ecosystem where consumers' experiences are affected by not only retail broadband providers but also by content and edge providers and other parties. We hope the decision will allow for a refocused conversation about effective ways to achieve national goals with respect to broadband access.

One-Sided, Heavy-Handed Rules are Misplaced and Harmful

NTCA agrees that operators should not block data and that consumers are entitled to clear disclosures regarding their terms of service. Similarly, we believe that there should be no unjust or unreasonable discrimination with respect to data or content as it travels across various communications networks. But the previous FCC Order focused on last-mile broadband service providers and did not address the impact of other entities, including middle mile networks, transit and peering networks, backbone providers and content distribution networks, on the broader marketplace. The order left these and similar large entities with significant market and bargaining power that can ultimately affect the ability of small ISPs to obtain fair interconnection and frustrate their ability to develop and deploy innovative offerings for consumers. The FCC can play an important and unique role specifically in applying carefully designed "rules of the road" to ensure effective interconnection between operators and the seamless transmission of data across networks and platforms consistent with consumer expectations.

A Role for Congress to Play

Uncertainty is harmful to all businesses, and to small broadband operators in particular. There is also some concern that states may look to regulate broadband services in varying ways – and some already are – in the absence of clearer federal guidance. Congress should pass legislation that creates more certainty and prioritize policies that secure availability and affordability of critical connectivity.