

Support Strong Net Neutrality Protections

Congressional Action Needed

- Congress must enact common-sense “rules of the road” that will ensure the internet is an open, competitive place for consumers and for businesses.
- Legislation must ensure that internet service providers (ISPs) may not: (1) block, (2) throttle or (3) establish paid prioritization (internet fast lanes). It must further require ISPs to be transparent in their network management practices.
- Frequent regulatory fluctuations are not good for internet providers nor for those who rely on the internet for business or personal use. It is time for Congress to act!

Congressional Actions To Date

- Rep. Blackburn (R-TN) introduced H.R. 4682, The Open Internet Preservation Act. NAR opposes this bill because it does not go far enough to protect consumers and businesses from paid prioritization.
- Sen. Kennedy (R-LA) introduced S. 2510, a companion to the House Bill also titled the Open Internet Preservation Act. NAR similarly opposes this bill.
- Rep. Coffman (R-CO) will be introducing The 21st Century Internet Act.

What To Tell Your Representatives And Senators

- Support The 21st Century Internet Act when introduced by Representative Coffman.
- Net neutrality is important to small, main street businesses—like REALTORS®—that depend on open internet access every day to run their businesses and serve their customers.
- Removing net neutrality rules could make it impossible for small real estate firms to compete with larger entities on the internet.

Issue Background

Net neutrality is shorthand for the concept that internet users should be in control of what content they view and what applications they use on the internet. More specifically, net neutrality requires that broadband networks be free of restrictions on content, sites or platforms. Networks should not restrict the equipment that may be attached to them nor the modes of communication allowed on them. Finally, networks should ensure that communication is not unreasonably degraded by other communication streams.

Some real estate professionals, realty website operators and real estate industry-affiliated content providers believe net neutrality provisions are necessary to prevent broadband providers (cable and telephone companies, primarily) from implementing possibly discriminatory practices that could negatively impact real estate professionals’ use of the internet to market their listings and services. Some possible examples include practices that could:

- Limit the public’s access to real estate websites.
- Limit a real estate firm’s access to customers of online service providers that may be in competition with network operators’ own services, e.g., internet phone services.
- Charging certain websites more for the broadband speeds necessary to properly transmit or display audio or video content such as online property tour, podcast or phone services.

Opposing/Supporting Views

Critics say that internet service providers (ISPs) will be disincented from investing in their networks if they cannot create new revenue streams from practices like paid prioritization.

Supporters argue that, in fact, broadband investment increased during the time period that the FCC enacted net neutrality rules.

Critics argue that net neutrality rules are a solution in search of a problem—that there is no need to regulate internet service providers.

Supporters say that one example of ISP questionable behavior is in 2012, AT&T told its customers they could only use FaceTime on AT&T’s wireless networks if they also bought a new data plan that doled out data on a capped basis, and that also happened to include unlimited voice minutes. This behavior would be prohibited under net neutrality rules.