

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
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Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on “Protecting the Internet and Consumers Through Congressional Action”
January 21, 2015

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Let me start by making it clear: I support network neutrality. It is the surprisingly simple concept that consumers—not big corporate interests—should control what they can access when they go online. And it represents the idea that small businesses should be able to compete on a level playing field.

Internet access has become a critical part of all of our lives. It’s how we apply for a job, it’s how we help our kids with their homework, and it’s how we grow our businesses. That is why four million Americans reached out to the FCC demanding strong net neutrality protections. And those four million people expect that we here in Washington will pay attention.

So I am heartened that my Republican colleagues now agree that we all benefit from clear rules of the road enforced by the Federal Communications Commission. I welcome their interest in bipartisan legislation—so long as it is a truly bipartisan effort right from the start. A legislative solution has the potential to end what has already been nearly a decade of protracted legal battles.

But our desire to end these debates once for all cannot come at the expense of the real protections that the FCC provides to consumers every day. The FCC must continue to serve an important role in the broadband age. It must remain the vigilant cop on the beat, standing ready to act whether it is to protect consumer privacy, to encourage accessibility for Americans with disabilities, or to promote broadband deployment to rural areas. And, just as important, it must maintain the flexibility to keep up with new technology.

But while we in Congress continue our work, I expect the FCC to continue its work. These are complicated issues with complex answers. It has taken the FCC—the expert agency—nearly 13 months to craft new rules that respond to the needs of the American public. Congress cannot be expected to work it all out in 13 days.

So I urge the FCC to continue to move forward as we begin this legislative effort. It has been over a year since the court wiped out the core net neutrality rules. So it has been over a

year since consumers and innovators last had strong network neutrality protections. That is simply too long. The time for the FCC to act is now.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in Congress and with the Commission to ensure the Internet remains an open platform for commerce, innovation, and self-expression for generations to come.