

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 “The Uncertain Future of the Internet”
February 25, 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I have said many times before, I firmly support network neutrality. Net neutrality is critical because access to the Internet is critical. We go online to apply for jobs, to help our kids with their homework, and to grow our businesses. These are just a few of the reasons why four million Americans reached out to the FCC demanding strong network neutrality protections.

Due to this overwhelming civic engagement, we are on the eve of an historic event at the FCC. Tomorrow the Commission is set to put into place what may be the strongest Internet protections consumers have ever had. And for all of you who called in; who wrote in; who came in to support net neutrality, you will see that the FCC and the rest of Washington knows how to listen, even if it doesn't always appear that way.

So I welcome the majority's change of heart and their offer to legislate. I remain open to looking for ways to enshrine the FCC's network neutrality protections into law. But our effort can only work if it is truly bipartisan.

Which is why I am baffled about why we are holding this hearing today. Just a few weeks ago, this subcommittee met on these same issues. We all heard a number of major concerns with the majority's discussion draft. We all heard that these are complicated issues that take more than a few weeks to sort through.

This subcommittee and our full committee has too much other important work to do to have the same hearings over and over again. For instance, the FCC just completed the most successful auction in history for our nation's airwaves. We could be spending this time building on that auction and establish a spectrum pipeline for the future. We are nearly two months into the new Congress with very little to show for it. I think this subcommittee has enough talent to do more than just obsess over one topic at a time. Our constituents expect more of us.

Perhaps once we all had time to review and evaluate the FCC's rules and their effects, the minority will draft its own legislation. Or better yet, we may want to look for ways to find and reach consensus on a bipartisan legislative draft.

Now is not that time, however. Now is the time for the whole FCC to show us its work. I thank Chairman Wheeler for his commitment to me that he will do everything in his power to release the order as soon as he can after the vote. To deliver on that promise, however, the Chairman needs the cooperation of his fellow Commissioners. So I ask all of the Commissioners at the FCC—even those who may disagree with the final decision—to work with Chairman Wheeler to make this order public as soon as possible. The American people have waited long enough.

Thank you.