

http:// *War on the WEB*

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The Federal Communications Commission's decision on Thursday, Dec. 14 to repeal net neutrality, which requires internet service providers to treat all media on the internet the same, is concerning to some faculty and students as its implications are still unclear. Senior Morgan Mitchell is one of those students, who fears that without net neutrality, access to online content will be obstructed.

"I think internet has basically become a necessity for everyone in the U.S.," Mitchell said. "Whether you're a college student or high school student or you already have a job, you need to have the internet so you can complete that job."

In effect, net neutrality prevented companies like AT&T or Verizon from speeding up, slowing down, blocking or charging extra for any websites or applications that customers want to use. It was established through FCC regulations put forth during the Obama administration in 2015 to ensure free use of the internet for all.

Like Mitchell, those in favor of net neutrality fear the repeal of federal regulations forbidding these practices will lead to a much more restricted and expensive internet. Along with that is the possibility of additional charges to customers' monthly internet service bills. Mitchell says that if this is a result of the FCC's decision, he will likely have to start chipping in to cover the costs.

FCC chairman Ajit Pai led the motion to repeal net neutrality — his argument being that less regulation on broadband services will eventually benefit customers. He feels that the

increased competition between these companies will yield innovation and more diversified services to customers.

Those in favor of the FCC's movement also supported the repeal because they claim they are unfairly charged for upgraded network capacity that they do not use, which they have no choice but to pay for.

Some of the larger telecom companies like AT&T and Comcast have assured customers that their services will not change without the regulations, but not all consumers are satisfied with their non-legally binding commitment. Still, social studies teacher Sean McCarroll doesn't think that the repeal is as troublesome as some have made it out to be.

"Not much will change because of this change," McCarroll said. "If providers start slowing down speeds, regulating access to competitor's sites, or charging extra for things we already use, they'll see a decline in business as users move to other services. Either all of them would have to play that game for it to work, or we won't see much of a change."

McCarroll also added that during the years before net neutrality legislation was put in place, there weren't many violations, and the public seemed satisfied with the way broadband

companies were operating.

Some of the cases that prompted the pass of net neutrality included Comcast's interference with users from downloading music and movies from a site called BitTorrent which competed with a company application, according to the New York Times. AT&T was also caught for restricting customers' access to FaceTime unless they paid for a more extensive data plan. There have also been

accusations made against Verizon for slowing loading times to Netflix and YouTube videos. McCarroll noted that since these services aren't used often on an educational level, the repeal probably won't affect teachers and students, but their home usage of the internet could be altered.

While the intent of the repeal was to increase competition in a diverse market, some fear that it will actually work against that. Opposition claims that without net neutrality, large corporations will monopolize the broadband industry. Art and computer graphics teacher Michael Lamb agrees that the repeal could have unintended repercussions.

"I think that smaller companies wouldn't have the same access to the internet (without net neutrality) as others, so they wouldn't be able to survive," Lamb said. "I would worry about the manipulation of society for whatever reason. For

political (or commercial) gain, all those things that I mentioned, large corporations having unfair advantages."

However, McCarroll said that some of the actions of broadband corporations that could be perceived as commercial abuse are actually just them acting as any business would.

"They're organizations whose goal is to make profit and boost shareholder value. They're not democratically elected or providing internet access for moral reasons, which would mean that any perceived 'abuse' is actually just them operating under their intended purpose," McCarroll said. "That being said, I think the only thing we'd really see is companies making it inconvenient to use their competitor's products."

Congress reserves the power to overturn the FCC decision by passing a Resolution of Disapproval. Since the repeal is still widely unpopular, pleas to the public to write and call state representatives and urge them to act against the FCC have been circulating social media platforms like Twitter and Reddit.

According to Lamb, the most concerning aspect of the repeal is the unpredictability of how it will affect citizens. It could prove to be a false alarm as McCarroll believes, or lead to the restricted internet that Mitchell worries about.

"I don't know what it will look like," Lamb said. "That's the unnerving part, is that I don't know."


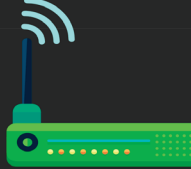



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Contributing: Preston Rossignol

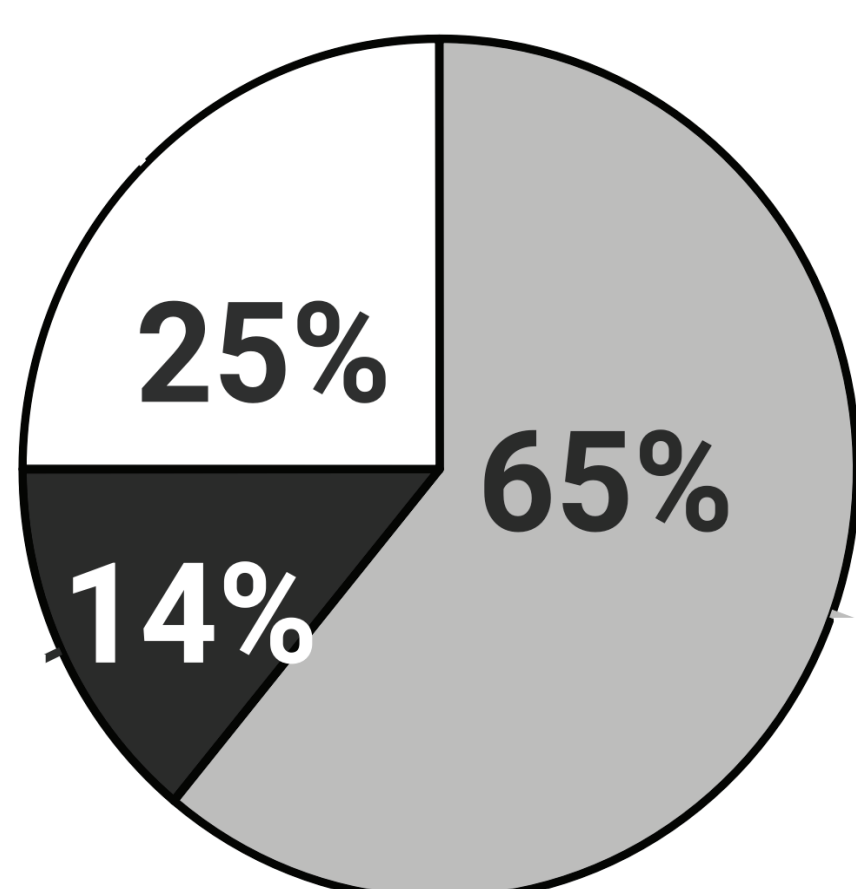
NET NEUTRALITY

KEEP vs. REPEAL

 <p>With net neutrality, Internet service providers can't control what users can see and access.</p>	 <p>Without net neutrality, Service providers have more say over the services they offer</p>
 <p>Without net neutrality, providers could block competing websites</p>	 <p>Companies won't block websites because it impedes their ultimate goal: to please the consumer. So, there is no need for regulation.</p>
 <p>Service providers could make fast and slow lanes, prioritizing certain programs over others.</p>	 <p>Creating levels of service that can be purchased by consumers will increase profits and boost the economy.</p>
 <p>Companies could make some websites work better on their platforms, reducing competition</p>	 <p>Less restrictions on companies will lead to more competition between them, creating a need for innovation.</p>
 <p>The web service industry is controlled by only a few service providers. This allows them to change service plans with few repercussions.</p>	 <p>Repealing net neutrality could increase competition between service providers, increasing innovation that benefits consumers</p>

AMBER BRAKER

STUDENT OPINION: SURVEY OF 64 NORTH STUDENTS



Opinion	Percentage
Keep	65%
Don't know what net neutrality is	14%
Repeal	25%

Legend:
 ● Keep
 ● Don't know what net neutrality is
 ○ Repeal

LINDSEY RAMSDELL