

**A Resolution of the Washington County Democratic Party
Resolution 2017-051
Regarding Support for a Free and Open Internet with Title II Protections**

1. **WHEREAS** Article 2 Plank 16 of the Democratic Party of Oregon (DPO) platform states, “We believe the Internet is an essential resource for all members of our society, and must be treated as a public utility with net neutrality. We believe universally available high-speed Internet access is necessary for a free, democratic society in the 21st century;”¹ and

2. **WHEREAS** Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are currently required by the Federal Communication Commission to maintain net neutrality and all subscribers have unlimited and equal access to any website for the same price, regardless of income level; and

3. **WHEREAS** the Internet is a platform for freedom of speech and free expression and has given voice to and provided connectivity to a broad spectrum of the population; and

4. **WHEREAS** net neutrality allows citizens to obtain information, conduct research, communicate with each other and organize in support of, or in opposition to, government actions thereby expanding citizen participation in their democracy; and

5. **WHEREAS** Title II of the *Telecommunications Act* treats ISPs like a ‘common carrier’ utility and is what keeps the Internet vibrant, innovative, and creates a level playing field for large and small content providers. Moreover, Title II is the most solid legal foundation for net neutrality protections;² and

6. **WHEREAS** FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said, “I think the issue is pretty simple. I favor a free and open Internet and I oppose Title II;”³ and

7. **WHEREAS** polling data suggest the majority of Americans support net neutrality, **if they know what it is;**⁴ and

8. **WHEREAS** current FCC Internet Conduct Standards prohibit ISPs from: blocking users’ access to websites; “paid prioritization” practices by ISPs that create “fast lanes” at higher prices; “throttling” by ISPs to intentionally slow down connection times;⁵ and

9. **WHEREAS** the Trump administration announced its intention to roll back the *Open Internet Order* Title II net neutrality rules on equal access; and

10. **WHEREAS** the FCC, under Chairman Pai, is working to eliminate Title II net neutrality protections to be able to give big ISP providers like Verizon and Comcast control over what Internet users see and do online, Internet speeds and fees; and

11. **WHEREAS** the FCC proposed rule, titled *Restoring Internet Freedom*, reclassifies ISPs from common carriers to information service providers similar to television and radio, and shifts legal authority over ISP activities from the FCC to the more loosely regulated Federal Trade Commission;⁶ and

12. **WHEREAS** *Restoring Internet Freedom* would allow ISPs to create tiered fee-for-service pricing structures resulting in higher costs to subscribers for unlimited web access and access to popular sites such as Google, Facebook, and Amazon. The rule also would allow ISPs to slow down connections and restrict access for users who cannot afford to pay for top-tier service; and

13. **WHEREAS** Tom Wheeler, the former FCC Chair, said the FCC "got a letter from 800 entrepreneurs, saying, 'you can't [repeal net neutrality] because you'll threaten our access, our ability to... reach consumers... We'll have to go and say, 'mother may I' to get on the networks. We won't be able to compete with the big guys who have deep pockets to pay for your fast lanes. 800 [entrepreneurs] vs. four [ISPs]";⁷ and

14. **WHEREAS** US broadband infrastructure is privately owned and operated by huge companies that often enjoy a near-monopoly position in their markets. According to FCC data, as of December 2012, nearly 30 percent of US households had only one choice for broadband provider. Monopoly holders have little incentive to weaken their profits by investing in infrastructure to improve service, so unsurprisingly the US is falling behind on global comparisons of broadband speed.⁸

THEREFORE, be it Resolved by the Democratic Party of Washington County, in support of the free flow of information vital to a healthy democratic society, that:

1. **The Democratic Party of Washington County** requests the State's legislators to enact a state law requiring and codifying net neutrality in Oregon.

2. **The Democratic Party of Washington County** urges U.S. Senators Wyden and Merkley and U.S. Representative Bonamici to sponsor federal legislation strengthening antitrust laws to eliminate ISP gateway and hosting service monopolies, and protect democratic principles of equal access to information through an open Internet.

3. The Democratic Party of Washington County will forward this resolution to all Washington County state legislators, U.S. Senators Wyden and Merkley, and U.S. Representative Bonamici, and request a statement from each of their position on this issue.

4. The Democratic Party of Washington County authorizes submittal of this resolution for consideration by the Democratic Party of Oregon during its November 2017 Central Committee meeting requesting action by the Oregon legislature during the 2017-2018 session.

Note: ISPs (Comcast, Verizon, US Telecom), telecommunications trade lobbies, and pro-corporate political conservatives oppose net neutrality. Content providers (Amazon, Facebook, Google, Reddit, Netflix, and Etsy) support net neutrality.

Citations

¹ Article 2 Plank 16, Democratic Party of Oregon Platform.

² *Telecommunications Act of 1996*, Pub. LA. No. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (1996), Sec. 3, p.6.

³ Karr, Timothy, “*6 Things the FCC Doesn’t Want You to Know About Net Neutrality*,” Moyers & Company, billmoyers.com/story/fcc-chairman-net-neutrality, March 25, 2017.

⁴ Brodtkin, Jon, “*Cable lobby conducts survey, finds that Americans want net neutrality*,” [Arstechnica.com](http://arstechnica.com), May 2017; Ferenstein, Gregory, “*Poll: Majority of Americans support net neutrality (if they know what it is)*,” venturebeat.com, May 18, 2014

⁵ *Open Internet Order*, Federal Communications Commission, FCC 15-24 (2015), p.7.

⁶ Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, *In the Matter of Restoring Internet Freedom*, Federal Communications Communications, FCC-17-60, WC Docket No. 17-108 (2017), p. 8-9, 23-24.

⁷ Brodtkin, Jon, “*Tom Wheeler defends Title II rules, accuses Pai of helping monopolists*,” arstechnica.com, June 29, 2017.

⁸ Ohanian, Alexis and Singham, Roy, “*Net Neutrality, Monopoly, and the Death of the Democratic Internet*,” motherboard.vice.com, May 8, 2014.

Resolution submitted by Jo Six and Vallie Gilham, 9/8/17; passed for 1st reading by P&RC – 9/5/2017.