

**Remarks of FCC Commissioner Mignon L. Clyburn (as prepared for delivery)**  
**“Net Neutrality and the Fight for Our Digital Rights”**  
**The Voices for Internet Freedom Coalition**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**February 27, 2017**

Thank you Steven, for the wonderful introduction. It is great to be part of today’s conversation on net neutrality, or as I prefer to call it, the “open internet.”

So what do Title II reclassification, broad forbearance authority, and interconnection have in common? Before you start to doze, let me quickly say, that while these are all concepts contained in the FCC’s 2015 Open Internet Order, this is not how people outside the halls of the FCC and Communications Bar, generally talk about their experiences online, or with their broadband service providers. Yet this regulatory minutia is exactly what consumes those of us in D.C. and in academia when it comes to protecting a free and open internet.

And while it is true, that I have been an FCC Commissioner for nearly eight years now, for me, the very essence of the open internet debate is quite simple: How do we ensure, that one of the most inclusive, enabling, empowering platforms of our time, continues to be one where all applications, new products, ideas and diverse points of view have the exact same chance of being seen and heard by everyone, regardless of class, race, economic status or where they call home? This question was my compass, as I evaluated our 2015 decision, and it is also the answer to why I continue to strongly support these rules.

While some have described what the FCC did two years ago as “unprecedented,” in actuality, it was just the latest chapter in a long history of efforts to preserve an open internet. Most of you are aware of this, and I will spare the rest of you the detailed history lesson, but in 2004, it was then-FCC Chairman Michael Powell who announced his vision that broadband consumers should be entitled to certain “internet freedoms.” One year later, the FCC would unanimously approve the *Internet Policy Statement*, laying out four guiding principles designed to encourage broadband deployment and to “preserve and promote the open and interconnected nature, of the Internet.” These principles sought to ensure that consumers had the right to access and use the lawful online content, applications, and devices of their choice, and to do so in a competitive internet ecosystem.

Fast forward to 2015, when the FCC adopted rules to ensure that Americans could reap the economic, social, and civic benefits of an open internet today and into the future. These rules were put in place, to ensure broadband providers cannot keep you from accessing the content of your choice or playing favorites with a competitor.

People might not use the terms, “blocking,” “throttling or even “ecosystem” in their everyday speak, but they clearly understand that if a broadband provider owned their favorite streaming video service and decided to speed up that service while disadvantaging a competing video service with slower speeds, that this is unfair. Or worse, if they actually blocked the competing video services all together or forced them to pay an additional toll for access to those services.

These are just some of the scenarios that make net neutrality so important when it comes to educating underserved, but deserving communities, improving health and wellness access, improving economic opportunities for underperforming, yet entrepreneurial communities, as well as the continued growth and viability of the internet.

Getting to this point was not easy, and protecting the Commission's 2015 Open Internet will not be either. But so many Americans made their voices heard that at one point, with more than four million submissions, they even crashed the FCC's website! This means, that we are not alone.

Now the D.C. Circuit did their part by affirming the FCC's rules. Now it is time for us to once again roll up our sleeves and fight for the protections embodied in the Open Internet Order, that are designed to ensure that the internet remains an open platform, that enables free speech, freedom of expression and the ability for innovation to flourish. The FCC's recently adopted broadband privacy rules, which give consumers clear notice and robust choice about how their personal data is used must be protected, and orders to stay or turn back the gains we have made must always be challenged.

If you have heard me speak recently, you know that my motto is putting #ConsumersFirst. Whether it is a billing dispute, poor service quality or a violation of the open internet rules, consumers expect there to be a cop on the beat. A light-touch Title II approach has allowed the FCC to be that watchful eye that ensures consumers are protected in a broadband world, and I will not go along with any effort that would rescind the promises we made to the American people to protect and serve them in the digital age.

I remain grateful to the Voices for Internet Freedom Coalition, including the Center for Media Justice, Free Press, Color of Change, the National Hispanic Media Coalition and everyone else who helped to make this event possible. Thank you again for inviting me to be here today, and for giving me the opportunity to reaffirm my commitment to ensuring, that the internet remains an open platform for free speech and freedom of expression in the decades to come.