



Media Minutes

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TRANSCRIPT

The Public Has Spoken: Net Neutrality RULES

In surge of last-minute activity, more than 19,000 comments – representing several hundred thousand individuals and hundreds of groups — were filed at the Federal Communications Commission last week prior to the deadline for initial comments on new Network Neutrality rules.

Misty Perez-Truedson is program manager of Free Press and the SaveTheInternet.com coalition, an alliance of hundreds of groups dedicated to preserving Net Neutrality – the longstanding principle that prevents big phone and cable companies from discriminating against online content or applications.

Misty Perez-Truedson: *The FCC received close to 20,000 comments, which is actually quite an amazing amount of comments in the docket and a majority of those are from the public, and they are comments in favor of net neutrality rules – strong net neutrality protections. So some of the most interesting comments that were in there were filed by individuals like you or I that were just going to the docket and filing in our thoughts as to why the open internet is important to us maybe important to us as a small business owner, a gamer, someone who simply just likes to communicate with their friends and family online.*

Comments were filed by a wide array of individuals including engineers, musicians, scientists, artists, organizers, small businesses, residents of rural communities and venture capitalists, to name a few.

Perez-Truedson believes it's incredibly important for the public to engage in a process like this one and share personal stories with policymakers.

Misty Perez-Truedson: *I think so many people did it because they care about the open Internet. They realize that the internet is the future of our communications system and we need to protect it. I think it's very easy when you explain to someone what net neutrality is for them to grasp that yeah that's what I want for my internet experience. I want it to be open I want to be able to access the websites and communicate with the folks that I care about and do what I want on the internet without have a gatekeeper.*

Find out more about Net Neutrality at www.SaveTheInternet.com.

Strange Bedfellows Join Together to Stop the Comcast-NBC Universal Mega-Merger

What kind of media behemoth would arise from the merger of Comcast and NBC Universal? In an open letter to President Obama and Congress, a group of industry, labor and public interest organizations described a destructive giant that would harm smaller competitors and drive up prices for consumers.

The organizations that signed the letter don't always see eye-to-eye. But groups like Common Cause and the Parents Television Council agree with the Writers Guild of America and Morality in Media that the merger will damage the media landscape and diminish diverse voices on TV.

The American Cable Association also signed on to the letter. It represents nearly 900 small and rural cable companies across the country. Vice President Ross Lieberman says that Comcast and NBC-Universal currently compete to provide programming to cable companies. If the merger happens, much of that competition will disappear.

Ross Lieberman: *The fact that the USA Network won't be competing with E Entertainment Network for programming and aren't competing to get eyeballs from our customers, they'll be able to join together and they'll be offered at the same time, and you won't have that competition that many times drives those costs lower.*

And with increasing costs, the smaller cable providers aren't able to reinvest in their networks.

Ross Lieberman: *What ends up happening is they have less money left over to make investments to upgrade their services, to roll out broadband deeper into their service areas, to further deploy the competitive services, and in the worst case, pushes them out of business.*

David Goodfriend, a satellite industry lobbyist and radio host, is concerned about Comcast's past behavior regarding sports programming. He has started SportsFansCoalition.org, an alliance of groups concerned about access to sports on TV.

David Goodfriend: *One of the most glaring examples of the sports media marketplace breaking down is in cities like Philadelphia, San Diego, New York, where the cable company also owns the local sports team and the local sports arena and the local sports network, and lo and behold, tells you that the only way you can watch your local team is if you subscribe to cable – no other way. So we ask a logical question: If that's how Comcast plays in its own backyard, what happens when it owns NBC Sports?*

Goodfriend wants sports fans to understand media issues and have a voice in public policy matters in Washington.

David Goodfriend: *Sports are like the canary in the coal mine. Everybody understands sports, enjoys sports. But when you find yourself less and less able to watch your favorite teams, that's an indicator of the media marketplace falling apart.*

Comcast will be filing pre-merger papers with the Federal Communications Commission and the Department of Justice by the end of this month. Both the House and Senate plan to hold hearings on the merger in the near future.

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