



Photos: Maria Merkulova

2017: Unprecedented Threats to Your Rights to Connect and Communicate

HOW FREE PRESS IS FIGHTING BACK

Civil rights and civil liberties are under attack in the Trump era. People of color, Muslims, immigrants and other vulnerable communities are in danger. And the Trump administration is trying to dismantle every single victory we've won on media and technology — including the FCC's historic Net Neutrality rules that protect free speech, choice and innovation online.

Free Press has been standing up to this administration and its enablers from day one. Thanks to our members, donors and allies, we're inspiring record numbers of activists to speak out, band together and organize events in their own communities. Check out these highlights from 2017 so far.



Anika Navaroli of Color Of Change speaks at the May rally outside the FCC. Photo: Maria Merkulova

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai and industry allies in Congress want to let broadband providers like AT&T, Comcast and Verizon lock down and control the internet.

People need the open internet to share and access information, advance their education and pursue job opportunities. Without Net Neutrality, people would lose access to a critical platform for organizing in response to Trump's authoritarian agenda. This would hurt everyone who uses the internet to tell their own stories, challenge systemic racism and fight for justice.

The stakes couldn't be higher — which is why Free Press is pulling out all the stops.

Here's what your support has made possible:

We helped drive a record number of comments at the FCC. More than **20 million people** have submitted comments — smashing the previous record of 4 million comments in 2014.

We organized the Internet-Wide Day of Action. Alongside our partners Demand Progress and Fight for the Future, we organized 24 hours of nonstop activism on July 12. Five million people emailed their lawmakers; 2 million people sent comments to the FCC; and at least 125,000 websites, activists, creators and organizations participated in the online protest, including Amazon, Netflix, reddit and Twitter.

We launched Team Internet. Together with our day-of-action partners, we're building an unstoppable grassroots network of volunteers who can hold their lawmakers accountable. Already nearly half a million people have signed up to participate. During August's congressional recess, many of these activists lobbied their members of Congress in their home districts, calling on them to stand up for the current FCC protections and oppose any damaging legislation.

We put the FCC on notice. In April, we "rickrolled" FCC Chairman Pai and industry allies at the agency's monthly meeting, blasting the 1987 Rick Astley song "Never Gonna Give You Up" over a speaker while singing modified lyrics about Net Neutrality. In May, we picketed Pai outside the right-wing think tank where he was giving a speech. On May 18 — the day Pai officially unveiled his plan to kill Net Neutrality — we held a huge rally outside the FCC featuring speeches from activist leaders and six members of Congress.

We highlighted the open internet's significance for people of color. We teamed up with our partners in Voices for Internet Freedom — which fights for the digital rights of communities of color — to hold a briefing on Capitol Hill featuring Rep. Maxine Waters. Voices also organized two standing-room-only community forums: Our event in Los Angeles' Skid Row neighborhood highlighted the need for affordable internet access; our gathering in Atlanta underscored why Net Neutrality is a racial-justice issue.

We (once again) made the definitive case for real Net Neutrality. We debunked the Trump FCC's lies in our report *It's Working*, which proved that the open-internet rules haven't harmed investment and innovation (in fact, the opposite is true). In our comments to the FCC, we demonstrated that Title II is the *only* way to protect real Net Neutrality — and we showed how gutting the Net Neutrality protections would hurt people of color, low-income communities and rural residents in particular.

We got the truth out. So far this year Free Press has earned thousands of press hits — 380 of them just in the two days after the July day of action. *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* were among the outlets that quoted us.

We're gearing up for a court battle. In 2016 and 2017, we successfully defended the Net Neutrality rules in court against industry challenges. We'll sue the FCC if it overturns these essential protections.

We're readying for a fight on Capitol Hill. Opponents in Congress are already trying to undermine Net Neutrality. We're teaming up with lawmakers who are open-internet champions to block any harmful bills.

We're taking the fight local. We're supporting Team Internet volunteers who are organizing their own local actions and events, canvassing their neighbors and recruiting fellow activists in communities across the country.



Bryan Mercer of the Media Mobilizing Project speaks at the May rally. Photo: Maria Merkulova

NEWS VOICES: Transforming Local Media

Runaway media consolidation has decimated local news coverage, and New Jersey and North Carolina are two of the states hit hardest. We launched our News Voices project in New Jersey in 2015 to help fix the local-news crisis, and we expanded it to North Carolina this year. Here's what we've been up to in both states.



News Voices: New Jersey

After New Jersey received a whopping \$332 million from selling off two public-media stations in an FCC auction, we launched an unprecedented campaign: persuading lawmakers to invest a portion of the proceeds in a fund that would strengthen local journalism. We then craft a bill that would create the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium, a partnership with four state universities that would support local journalism and civic-tech projects.

Free Press Action Fund members lobby in Trenton. Photo: Tim Karr

Here's what your support has made possible in New Jersey:

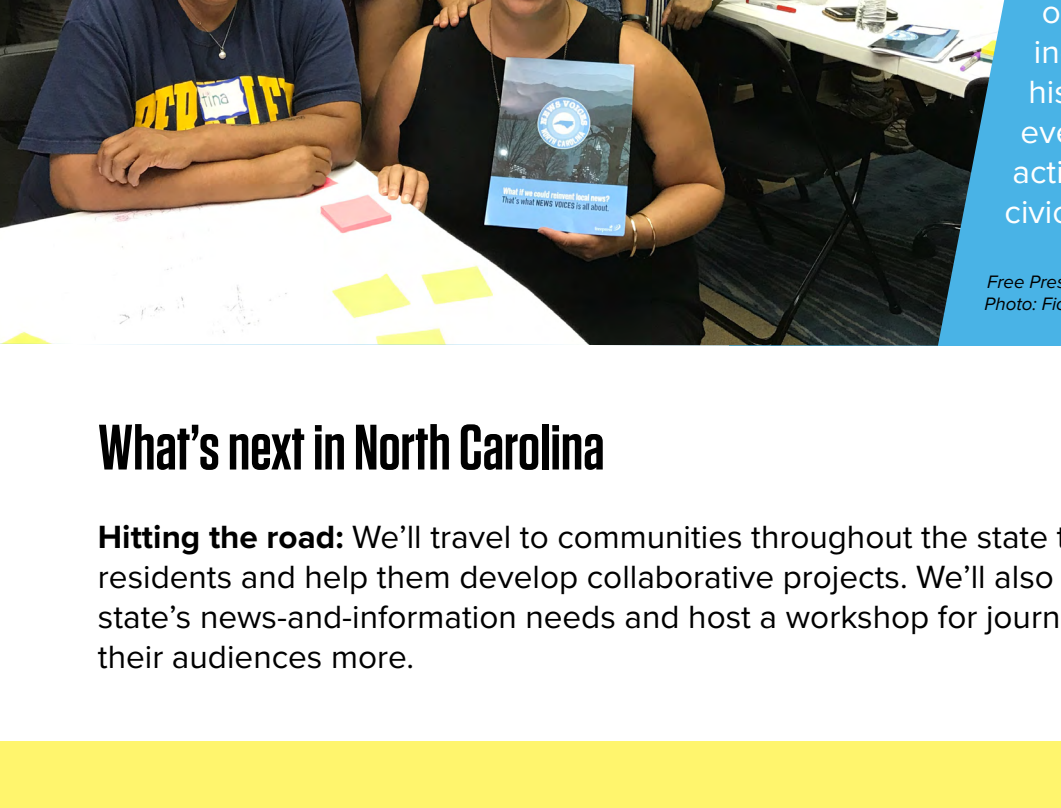
We built major grassroots momentum. We held seven forums to involve residents in the campaign and solicit ideas for projects the fund could support. Thousands of our members also signed petitions and called their lawmakers to advocate for the bill.

We built a strong network of allies. More than 60 groups, including the state's leading Hispanic civic and media organizations, are advocating for the bill. We brought in Montclair State University, the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rowan University and Rutgers University as partners in creating the consortium.

We got the bill introduced. Our on-the-ground lobbying inspired the majority leaders in the state Assembly and Senate to co-sponsor the bill, which would invest \$100 million over five years in projects that would give residents the news and information they need. After the bill's introduction on June 1, we organized a Lobby Day and now have 14 legislators signed on as co-sponsors.

What's next in New Jersey

Moving the bill over the finish line: We're pushing for the legislation's passage during the lame-duck session beginning in November. We'll continue to lobby lawmakers and mobilize our members to build outside pressure.



News Voices: North Carolina

We're listening to local concerns: We launched the North Carolina project with two community events in April and have hosted a number of local gatherings since then. We're bridging the gap between reporters and residents and in August held our first big event — on journalism's role in tackling inequity in Charlotte. Held at a historically Black university, the event brought together journalists, activists, members of the clergy, civic leaders, artists and residents.

Free Press organizers meet with local residents. Photo: Fiona Morgan

What's next in North Carolina

Hitting the road: We'll travel to communities throughout the state to meet with reporters and residents and help them develop collaborative projects. We'll also release our research on the state's news-and-information needs and host a workshop for journalists who want to engage with their audiences more.

What else we're doing

Stopping the Sinclair-Tribune merger

Free Press is leading the fight to stop the Sinclair Broadcast Group from taking over Tribune Media and owning 233 local TV stations reaching 72 percent of U.S. households. The FCC is gaming its rules to make this merger happen, a reward for a company that's used the airwaves to push pro-Trump and anti-Muslim propaganda. We've filed a formal challenge to the merger at the FCC, filed a lawsuit over the agency's rule changes and served as the go-to critic in the press for reporters covering this deal.

Fighting mass surveillance

We're helping to organize a coalition of advocacy groups addressing how surveillance impacts people of color, immigrants and others whose civil rights and civil liberties are most under threat.

Restoring privacy

We're engaging thousands of new activists who are outraged over the decision from congressional Republicans and Trump to gut the essential broadband-privacy protections we pushed the FCC to adopt last year.

Protecting public media

In March we rallied on Capitol Hill with allied groups and delivered 660,000 petitions urging Congress to safeguard the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in the face of a Trump-administration plan to defund it. Congress backed down and didn't cut the funds.

None of this work would be possible without supporters like you.

Please help celebrate our progress — and pave the way for future success — by making a gift today to **Free Press** or **Free Press Action Fund**. Thank you!

Free Press and Free Press Action Fund are independent and nonpartisan. We do not support or oppose any candidate for public office. We rely solely on the generosity of charitable foundations — and individual donors like you.

