

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2309

69

January 30, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St SW
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Chairman Pai:

Congratulations on your appointment as head of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). As Chairman, you have an obligation to protect Americans' access to diverse information sources and to ensure that the internet remains a tool for American innovation, economic growth, and public discourse. I have no doubt that you recognize the significance of your new role, but your stated opposition to strong net neutrality rules raises serious concerns about your commitment to honoring the First Amendment. Allowing giant corporations to pick and choose the content available to everyday Americans would threaten the basic principles of our democracy. I urge you to protect freedom of speech by maintaining and enforcing the Open Internet Order.

Two years ago, American consumers and businesses celebrated the FCC's landmark vote to preserve a free and open internet by reclassifying broadband providers as common carriers under Title II of the Communications Act. The vote came after the FCC received nearly four million public comments, the majority of which supported strong net neutrality rules, making it the most commented-on FCC issue by three times. Consumers urged the Commission to protect their unfettered and affordable access to content; a wide range of advocacy organizations pressed the Commission to ensure all voices and ideas on the internet receive equal treatment from broadband providers, regardless of how deep any speaker's pocket is; and small businesses asked that the internet remain a level playing field so that they can continue to compete with larger companies.

While the FCC's vote to implement strong net neutrality rules was an important victory for American consumers and business, it also demonstrated the overwhelming power of grassroots activism and civic participation. In 2014, millions of Americans from across the political spectrum organized to ensure that their voices were heard, and – in the process – they redefined civic engagement in our country. But that kind of participation requires an open internet. Because of net neutrality, a handful of multibillion-dollar companies cannot control where their users get their information, and those massive corporations cannot choose to bury sites offering alternative viewpoints. And because of net neutrality, people from across the nation can connect with each other, share their ideas on the internet, and organize a community effort.

As you enter your new role as Chairman of the FCC, I urge you to respect the political process and the voices that made themselves so abundantly clear three years ago. Net neutrality is the First Amendment issue of our time, and I will fight to protect it every step of the way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Al Franken". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Al Franken
United States Senator