

**The Graduate Student Assembly  
The University of Texas at Austin**

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**Resolution:** G.R. 17 (F) 10 – In Support of Net Neutrality

**WHEREAS** (1): Net Neutrality is the principle that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) must treat all data on the Internet equally, without discrimination or differing costs based on user, content, platform, or application. Under Title II and the “Clear, Bright-Line Rules” of the Open Internet Order of 2015, broadband Internet and telecommunication services are banned from three specific practices that “invariably harm the open Internet:” 1) discrimination of consumer access (blocking), 2) degradation of Internet traffic based on source (throttling), and, 3) managing an open access network to benefit particular content, applications, services, or devices (paid prioritization);<sup>1,2</sup> and,

**WHEREAS** (2): Before 2015, broadband Internet services were regulated under Title I, a less rigorous regulatory framework.<sup>1</sup> Under this framework, a number of instances of throttling and blocking by ISPs have been documented, largely preventing consumers from using competing services.<sup>3</sup> When the FCC attempted to enforce Internet users’ access rights, ISPs charged that the FCC did not have the authority to do so, leading to the decision to regulate ISPs under Title II<sup>1</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS** (3): On May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the FCC adopted (by a 2-1 vote) a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to reconsider the 2015 Open Internet Order and reclassify Internet broadband access services to Title I classification and regulations, removing the stricter framework that prevents blocking, throttling, and paid prioritization;<sup>1</sup> and,

**WHEREAS** (4): The majority of voting Americans support the current rules governing Internet Service Providers, with a Morning Consult/Politico poll finding 52% of registered voters for, 18% opposed, and 29% unsure. This issue has bipartisan support, with 55% of registered Democrats and 52% of registered Republicans in favor<sup>4</sup>; and,

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<sup>1</sup> Gilroy, Angele. “The Net Neutrality Debate: Access to Broadband Networks.” Congressional Research Service. November 22, 2017. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40616.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Federal Communications Commission. March 12, 2015. “Report and Order on Remand, Declaratory Ruling, and Order.” [https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs\\_public/attachmatch/FCC-15-24A1.pdf](https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-15-24A1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Karr, Timothy. “Net Neutrality Violations: A Brief History.” InternetVoices.org. April 25, 2017. <https://www.internetvoices.org/blog/2017/04/25/net-neutrality-violations-brief-history>

<sup>4</sup> Graham, Edward. “Majority of Voters Support Net Neutrality Rules as FCC Tees Up Repeal Vote.” Morning Consult. November 29, 2017. <https://morningconsult.com/2017/11/29/strong-support-net-neutrality-rules-fcc-considers-repeal/>

**WHEREAS (5):** Net Neutrality is particularly significant for higher education and graduate research because of the high use and traffic needed for education, such as communication networks, data storage, and access to online journals. Jon Fansmith, Director of Government Relations at the American Council on Education, noted the cost of the loss of net neutrality would be massive, as “there is no part of modern higher education that doesn’t depend on the internet,” and that costs would likely be passed onto students<sup>5</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS (6):** Of greatest concern is the potential for Internet Service Providers to block specific content. According to Fansmith, this could have a tremendously negative impact on researching controversial topics such as gun control or abortion<sup>5</sup>; and

**WHEREAS (7):** The Association of American Universities, of which the University of Texas at Austin is a member, expressed that “enforceable net neutrality rules are essential” for preserving an open internet for research, education, and the free flow of information for higher education and the public<sup>6</sup>; now,

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT (1):** The Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) of the University of Texas at Austin calls upon the FCC members to vote to enforce net neutrality rules and keep ISPs regulated under Title II; and,

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT (2):** The GSA calls upon the graduate student body to contact their congressional representatives to have their opinions known and urge them to contact FCC voting members before the December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting; and,

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT (3):** The GSA calls upon the Administration of the University of Texas at Austin to continue providing student access to interdisciplinary library databases, subscriptions to research journals, and maintain Internet connection speeds regardless of the outcome of this vote; and,

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT (4):** Copies of this bill be sent to the Dean of the Graduate School, the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, the Office of the President, *The Daily Texan* and the *Austin American-Statesman*.

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<sup>5</sup> McKenzie, Lindsay. “Net Neutrality rollback Concerns Colleges.” Inside Higher Ed. November 29, 2017. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/11/29/colleges-voice-concern-over-planned-net-neutrality-rollback>

<sup>6</sup> American Association Of Community Colleges, American Association Of State Colleges And Universities, American Council On Education, Association Of American Universities, Association Of Public And Land-Grant, Universities Association Of Research Libraries, Educause, National Association Of College And University Business Officers, and The National Association Of Independent Colleges And Universities. “Higher Education Net Neutrality Comments.” July 18, 2017. <https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Intellectual-Property/201707-Higher-Ed-Net-Neutrality-Comments-AS-FILED.pdf>

**PASSED** by the GSA General Assembly, December 6, 2017

Signature of the GSA President 