

AT&T, Verizon Come Out Against Title II Classification for ISPs

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A collection of 28 CEOs of major communications companies are asking the FCC not to proceed with an attempt to reclassify broadband Internet access as a Title II public service.

Among the signatories of the letter were AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson and Verizon CEO Lowell McAdam.

The collective argues that the FCC's open Internet rules and a Title II designation, which would give the FCC regulatory rule over Internet Service Providers (ISP), are completely unrelated.

"As it did in 2010, the Commission should categorically reject efforts to equate the two once and for all," the letter demands.

The ISPs that signed the letter go on to claim that "even the potential threat of Title II had an investment-chilling effect by erasing approximately ten percent of some ISPs' market cap in the days immediately surrounding the Title II announcement in 2009/10."

The letter comes as the FCC saw significant backlash from the general public, content providers and consumer advocacy groups over its initial draft of open Internet rules, which would allow for ISPs to craft deals with content providers, such as Netflix or Hulu, that want their services given more bandwidth.

Opponents of such a system argue that it would create fast and slow lanes on the Web and ultimately discriminate against smaller content providers without the capital to compete with larger companies.

The letter signed by Stephenson and McAdam charges that even if Title II classification were granted it wouldn't stop ISPs from brokering such deals with content providers.

"In defending their approach, Title II proponents now argue that reclassification is necessary to prohibit "paid prioritization," even though Title II does not discourage—let alone outlaw—paid prioritization models," the letter states. "Dominant carriers operating under Title II have for generations been permitted to offer different pricing and different service quality to customers."

It was [reported Monday](#) [1] that the FCC has delayed a vote of its open Internet rules and reworking the wording of its current draft. The Wall Street Journal reported yesterday that the revised document will include new language that would

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ban broadband providers from blocking or slowing down websites but would still allow them to strike deals where content companies could pay for faster delivery of video and other content.

The new rules would apparently make it clear that the FCC intends to closely scrutinize those deals to ensure they don't discriminate against non-paying services.

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[1] <http://www.wirelessweek.com/news/2014/05/report-after-backlash-fcc-drafting-new-open-internet-rules>