



## **FCC Cites Groups Funded by Soros, Ford Foundations 206 Times in Internet Rules**

**Following ‘extremely bizarre’ decision, agency fails to mention important conservative group.**

By Joseph Rossell

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You get what you pay for. The liberal Ford and Soros foundations spent \$196 million advocating for increased Internet regulation. New FCC rules revealed a shocking reliance on liberal activist groups those foundations funded, citing them a total of 206 times.

The 320-page document, released March 12, referenced groups like Common Cause, Free Press and Public Knowledge -- all which received Ford or Soros money. Public Knowledge was referenced 72 times and Free Press 61 times. Congress began grilling top FCC officials in multiple hearings about the controversial new Internet regulations March 17.

The FCC’s new regulations entirely ignored six top conservative organizations critical of the FCC seizing power over the Internet. There were no mentions of The Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, the American Enterprise Institute, the Media Research Center, the Competitive Enterprise Institute or American Commitment. The absence of American Commitment was especially ridiculous since that organization had a huge role in soliciting comments on the proposals.

At those Congressional hearings, FCC chairman Tom Wheeler defended his agency’s regulations claiming the “process was one of the most open and expansive process the FCC has ever run.” In a prepared statement ahead of the hearing, Wheeler said they’d “heard from nearly four million Americans, who overwhelmingly spoke in favor of preserving a free and open Internet.” But his claim contradicted evidence cited by the agency’s own report.

The FCC is closely tied to the network of liberal groups supporting so-called “net neutrality.” Internet activist group Public Knowledge received a combined \$6,355,500 from the Ford and Open Society Foundations and its founder and former president Gigi Sohn currently works as

counselor to the FCC Chairman. The current president of Public Knowledge used to work for New America Foundation, another “net neutrality” advocacy group mentioned in FCC’s rules that was given a combined \$14,077,875.

The group’s stated mission was to promote “an open internet.” Altogether Ford Foundation or George Soros’ Open Society Foundation gave \$71 million to groups cited by the FCC in the rules, not counting the additional 80-page dissent. The document, without the dissent, also had 1,952 footnotes.

FCC relied on Public Knowledge’s pro-regulation position. “As recognized by Congress, the Commission’s [FCC] oversight here is necessary to protect consumers from service interruption and termination,” the new regulations quoted Public Knowledge saying.

The rules also cited Public Knowledge’s argument that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) should not be allowed to charge customers different rates based on usage. Public Knowledge said that if ISPs did so, they, “have every incentive to construct a slow lane that performs poorly enough to justify extra payments from those edge services who can afford to do so.”

Common Cause and Free Press were also cited by the FCC, and both were funded by the Ford and Open Society Foundations. Common Cause’s Education Fund got \$4,398,500 from the two foundations, while Free Press got \$6,120,000. The groups had something else in common too. Former FCC Commissioner and former FCC Acting Chairman Michael Copps sits on both their boards.

Copps supported the FCC decision to classify Internet service as a “utility,” writing on March 2 that it “was the biggest and best decision by any FCC in years, perhaps ever.”

In 2009, Copps criticized those concerned with the possibility of the FCC reinstating the anti-free speech Censorship Doctrine that the left calls the Fairness Doctrine. He called them “conspiracy theorists” who are engaged in “issue mongering” by “resurrecting the straw man of a bye-gone Fairness Doctrine.”

The FCC cited plenty of liberal support for their regulations and even made it seem like most reactions were pro-regulation.

“While there has been some public dispute as to the percentage of comments taking one position or another, it is clear that the majority of comments support Commission action to protect the open Internet,” the FCC said.

But a liberal foundation mentioned in a footnote of the massive document proved the opposite. The Sunlight Foundation, a group that received a combined \$1,595,000 from Ford and Open Society, analyzed 1.6 million comments to the FCC in a December 2014 report. It found that 60 percent of the comments opposed net neutrality, and attributed the bulk of those to the

conservative group American Commitment. Indeed, 56.5 percent of all comments submitted to the FCC were based on language formulated by American Commitment, according to the report.

Yet, American Commitment wasn't cited a single time in the new FCC rules.

American Commitment President Phil Kerpen told MRC Business that the FCC's ruling was "extremely bizarre," and that the "result is: price regulation, tax hikes, job losses."

"We're taking something that's really worked without regulation and it's going to be really complex with it," Kerpen said.

FCC Commissioner Ajit Pai, who was of two votes against the new regulations, recently said, "I would imagine in the next month or two we're going to see for the first time taxes placed on broadband bills. Your bill is going to go up."

Watchdog.org highlighted "one really scary sentence" from the FCC rules on March 13. The provision read, "A person engaged in the provision of broadband Internet access service, insofar as such person is so engaged, shall not block lawful content, applications, services, or non-harmful devices, subject to reasonable network management."

Who would "determine which Internet content is lawful and unlawful" remained unclear, according to Watchdog.org national investigative reporter Yaël Ossowski.