

15 Greatest Enemies of Net Neutrality

Strange bedfellows join forces to fight the FCC's anticipated regulation.

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While it suffers routinely from the usual ebb and flow of the news cycles, *net neutrality* has once again flared up to levels of heated debate with the recent [FCC vote](#) to begin a process that could lead to its eventualty. Because of this, the issue of net neutrality has never been so hotly contested or emergent as it is now. While nearly everyone in this modern, connected world have a stake in the outcome of this battle, there are parties involved with especially potent opinions. These are 15 names of gravitas that have aligned themselves *against* the push for net neutrality. Some are the very corporations that maintain the Web as we know it, some helped invent the Web in the first place, and others simply have vested interest for political gain. When it's all said and done, though, it's ultimately a fight over something that hasn't happened yet. See who's against it, then do some reading and decide for yourself.

AT&T

Needing no introduction, AT&T is one of the world's premier suppliers of bandwidth, be it wired or wireless, though with emphasis on the latter. The telecommunications giant came under heavy fire just days before the FCC vote for what appeared to be [an attempted astroturfing](#). The company's senior executive vice president of external and legislative affairs had apparently asked AT&T employees, via mass email, to regurgitate "talking points" on a debate forum using their personal email addresses to sign in. The attempt was not only a failure, but backfired.

John McCain

John McCain made his stance clear when he moved against the FCC by [introducing a bill](#) specifically prohibiting them from ever touching the issue of net neutrality. The so-called Internet Freedom Act was entered into play, citing "government takeover" like it were fashionable. While nobody wants to come out and say the bill is a joke, the odds of it ever making it as far as the president's desk are laughable, and at that point it would almost surely face a veto.

Alcatel-Lucent

As the most recent home to Bell Labs, Alcatel-Lucent is at the forefront of any Internet-technology debate by default. The company, while not nearly as widely known as some of its compatriots, [has a major stake](#) in any potential outcome stemming from the net neutrality debate. They've got some very progressive thoughts towards P2P file-sharing, but that doesn't stop them from making a case for what sounds an awful lot like **tiered service** -- all in the name of progress, of course.

ADC

ADC, a company deeply rooted in the emerging wireless broadband scene, has always tried to maintain an ironic identity of neutrality toward the net neutrality debates -- while being [listed as a member organization](#) in a consortium opposed to net neutrality laws. Unlike most companies with which it keeps company, ADC deals more in patents than actual hardware. These people want to make sure their *ideas* get used by only the companies they chose, for the purposes they prefer.

Verizon

Possibly AT&T's chief competitor in the lucrative realm of wireless service, Verizon is also deeply ensconced in the more traditional sphere of *wired* broadband. Days before the FCC vote, CEO Ivan Seidenberg voiced concerns over the issue. He mockingly used the phrase "dumb pipes" in reference to his own company, while describing companies like Google as providers of "smart apps" -- companies that net neutrality proponents are placing above an equal, and apparently affronted group of service providers. He says that these practices "ignore the benefits of smart networks." By that, he meant [tiered service](#).

Comcast

Comcast, who came under fire in 2007 for throttling the bandwidth of users engaging in P2P file-sharing, has recently become more vocal about the FCC's plans regarding net neutrality. David Cohen, executive vice president of broadband at Comcast, [blasted the FCC](#) for its handling of the incident. He reiterated that the company felt that it was handling the situation in keeping with "network management" practices. The company is regarded as one of three major broadband companies that make up the brunt of the opposition toward the FCC, along with AT&T and Verizon.

3M

Another player in the field, and member organization of [Hands Off the Internet](#), along with most companies on this list, 3M has a stake in net neutrality as it plays a part in manufacturing of materials used in the broadband markets. This comes as no surprise, since the company is notable for manufacturing *just about everything*.

Bob Kahn

Bob Kahn, along with Google's Vinton Cerf, **invented TCP/IP**. Kahn believes that no regulatory body should ever get their hands on the Internet, because he thinks that innovation and advancement can only come as the fruit of unregulated, unfettered competition between major industry players in a capitalist market. It's good to note at this point that Vinton Cerf opposes this point of view, and fights for net neutrality, against him.

Citizens Against Government Waste

This body of *concerned citizens* really speaks for itself. Following the likes of John McCain, this and many other politically-driven organizations have waded into a debate that has absolutely nothing to do with them. While an organization against over-governing may seem to make a marginal bit of sense in this case, other like-minded groups such as the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and the National Black Chamber of Commerce show just how ridiculous its involvement really is.

Dave Farber

A Fellow for the IEEE and oft-cited "grandfather of the Internet," Dave Farber was an integral part of the earliest years of computer-networking. He and many of his contemporaries have aligned themselves against net neutrality on the grounds that government regulation will stifle any potential advancements needed to allow the Internet to keep up with the pace of society. The outlook, aside from being rather doomsday-ish, completely discounts the negative repercussions of tiered services in an increasingly corporate-driven Internet.

Cato Institute

The Cato Institute is a think-tank based in Washington that aligns itself with "pro-libertarian" beliefs and backs a completely free market. The institute serves as a hired *voice of reason* during political debates, because of its pseudo-academic affiliations. Its involvement in this debate is expected, given present company.

Cisco

Cisco, partially blamed for enabling companies like Comcast, who run off Cisco hardware, is under harsh scrutiny for its alliances in this debate. From the company's [blog](#): "Opponents of net neutrality regulations, **including Cisco**, believe that allowing the development of differentiated broadband products, with different service and content offerings, will enhance the broadband market for consumers." Emphasis seems to be on the word *allowing*.

Competitive Enterprise Institute

Like the Cato Institute, the Competitive Enterprise Institute is a politically driven, free-market think tank that holds *libertarian* viewpoints. Also like the Cato Institute, CEI seems to draw its funding from a smattering of every major corporation ever to fund lobbyists. Its presence in this debate is also expected, though like its brethren, unnecessary.

Qwest

Qwest has quite an obvious stake in any proposed net neutrality laws since it's one of the nation's largest broadband carriers, along with Verizon, AT&T and Comcast. It's also famed in this debate for having a CEO (Dick Notebaert) who called net neutrality not only "nuts," but also "preposterous." That's executive-level tact.

Robert Pepper

Robert Pepper, a managing director of global advanced technology policy at Cisco, believes that net neutrality proponents present a "false paradigm" and that the world will be perfect and happy with "a variety of broadband service plans at a variety of price points to suit every type of consumer." He obviously sees no problem in tiered service solutions, nor does he have any grasp of the complexities of society where *normal* people live and dwell. He is the master of this list.