Top tech firms back open Internet in FCC letter

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Amazon, eBay, Facebook, Google, Twitter and other leading Web and technology companies expressed support Monday for Federal Communications Commission (FCC) efforts to ensure an open Internet.

"An open Internet fuels a competitive and efficient marketplace, where consumers make the ultimate choices about which products succeed and which fail," the chief executives and founders of two dozen companies said.

"This allows businesses of all sizes, from the smallest startup to larger corporations, to compete, yielding maximum economic growth and opportunity," they said in an open letter to FCC chairman Julius Genachowski.

Genachowski last month proposed new rules that would require Internet providers, including wireless carriers, to treat all Web traffic equally.

He said the FCC needed to play a role in ensuring "network neutrality" -- the principle that Internet service providers (ISPs) provide the same speed and level of service to all Web users, regardless of size.

The new rules would prevent ISPs, for example, from blocking or slowing bandwidth-hogging Web traffic such as streaming video or other applications that put a strain on their networks or from charging different rates to users.

In their letter, the technology company executives said "for most of the Internet's history, FCC rules have ensured that consumers have been able to choose the content and services they want over their Internet connections.

"Entrepreneurs, technologists, and venture capitalists have previously been able to develop new online products and services with the guarantee of neutral, nondiscriminatory access by users, which has fueled an unprecedented era of economic growth and creativity," they said.

"America's leadership in the technology space has been due, in large part, to the open Internet," they added.

Among the signatories were Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, Craigslist founder Craig Newmark, Digg founder Kevin Rose, eBay chief executive John Donahoe, Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg, Google chief executive Eric Schmidt, LinkedIn executive chairman Reid Hoffman, Skype chief executive Josh Silverman, Twitter co-founder Evan Williams and YouTube co-founder Steve Chen.

During his White House campaign, President Barack Obama came out strongly in favor of net neutrality, which has met with opposition from telecommunications, wireless and cable companies such as AT&T, Verizon and Comcast.

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