

Net neutrality rules face mounting GOP opposition

October 5 2009, By JOELLE TESSLER , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Republican opposition is mounting as federal regulators prepare to vote this month on so-called "network neutrality" rules, which would prohibit broadband providers from favoring or discriminating against certain types of Internet traffic flowing over their lines.

Twenty House Republicans - including most of the Republicans on the House Energy and Commerce Committee - sent a letter to [Federal Communications Commission](#) Chairman Julius Genachowski on Monday urging him to delay the Oct. 22 vote on his [net neutrality](#) plan.

Genachowski, one of three Democrats on the five-member commission, wants to impose rules to ensure that broadband providers don't abuse their power over Internet access to favor their own services or harm competitors.

Democrats say the rules will keep phone companies from discriminating against Internet calling services and stop cable TV providers from hindering online video applications.

But in a letter to Genachowski on Monday, Rep. Cliff Stearns of Florida, the top Republican on the Subcommittee on Communications, Technology and the Internet, and his colleagues warned that new net neutrality regulations could discourage broadband providers from investing in their networks. The letter said that if Internet service providers can't manage traffic on their networks to ensure efficient service, consumers could suffer.

The Republicans are calling on Genachowski to conduct a "thorough market analysis" to determine whether new regulations are necessary.

Their points echoed those made in a letter that House Minority Leader John Boehner of Ohio and House Republican Whip Eric Cantor of Virginia sent to President [Barack Obama](#) on Friday.

Genachowski's office had no comment on the letters.

Meanwhile in the Senate, the top Republican on the Commerce Committee, Kay Bailey Hutchinson of Texas, is considering legislation that would prohibit the FCC from developing net neutrality rules.

Genachowski's proposal calls for the FCC to formally adopt four existing principles that have guided the agency's enforcement of communications laws since 2005. Those principles state that network operators must allow subscribers to access all legal online content, applications, services and devices.

Genachowski is also calling for the FCC to adopt two additional principles that would prevent broadband providers from discriminating against particular content or applications and would require them to be open about their network management practices. And he is calling for the agency to apply these rules across different types of broadband networks, including wireless networks.

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