

# Republican victory in US election dooms 'net neutrality'

November 8 2010, by Chris Lefkow

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A man uses a laptop computer at a wireless cafe. The stunning Republican gains in the US elections appear to have doomed efforts to pass a "net neutrality" bill that would require Internet service providers to treat all Web traffic equally.

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President [Barack Obama](#), Democrats in Congress and [Silicon Valley](#) have backed [net neutrality](#) but it has met with opposition from telecom and cable companies and many Republicans who see it as unnecessary government regulation.

With the Republicans seizing control of the House of Representatives in

Tuesday's vote and picking up half-a-dozen seats in the Senate, analysts said net neutrality is not expected to make any headway in Congress.

"There's essentially no prospect of a net neutrality bill passing anytime soon," said Richard Bennett, a senior fellow at the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation.

Bennett, in a blog post at [Hightechforum.org](http://Hightechforum.org), noted that all 95 Democratic members of the House and Senate who had signed a public pledge to protect an "[open Internet](#)" had lost their seats in the Republican tidal wave.

"This election puts net neutrality on the back burner, and raises the importance of spectrum, [intellectual property protection](#), and Internet privacy," Bennett said.

While disagreeing on net neutrality, many Republicans and Democrats agree there is a pressing need to auction off more wireless communications spectrum to cope with the explosion of mobile devices.

Another issue that appears headed for the back burner is immigration reform, which has been pushed by technology companies eager for visas for skilled engineers and software programmers from countries such as India.

"The Republican gains though are likely to make it more difficult to get comprehensive immigration reforms passed, which the tech industry has supported," said Ed Black, president of the Computer and Communications Industry Association (CCIA).

While net neutrality and comprehensive immigration reform appear to be out of reach, the new Congress being sworn in in January can be expected to move forward on some technology legislation.

"Many tech issues are bipartisan," said Black, citing cybersecurity and online privacy protection as areas where Democrats and Republicans can find common ground.

A number of bipartisan cybersecurity bills are already wending their way through Congress while the 1986 Electronic Communications Privacy Act is also being examined to bring it into the Internet age.

Tuesday's vote also saw the defeat of a US congressman who has been a prominent voice in technology issues for a long time and the election of a senator who has been a thorn in the side of technology giants.

Representative Rick Boucher, a Democrat from Virginia and net neutrality advocate who chaired the House subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet, lost his re-election bid.

Elected to the Senate was Richard Blumenthal, who as the attorney general of Connecticut spearheaded probes into adult services advertisements on Craigslist and Google's "Street View" online mapping service.

Tuesday's election also saw two high-profile former chief executives of technology companies, both Republicans, lose their bids for elected office in California.

Former eBay chief executive Meg Whitman lost the governor's race despite spending more than 160 million dollars of her own money on her campaign and former Hewlett-Packard chief executive Carly Fiorina failed in her Senate bid.

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