

Republicans seek to quash 'net neutrality' rules

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Republican members of the US Senate and House of Representatives are seeking to quash rules approved by US telecom regulators designed to ensure an open Internet. House majority leader Eric Cantor, a Republican from Virginia, pictured in 2009, said the resolution is intended to "debunk the FCC's harmful and partisan plan to regulate the Internet."

Republican lawmakers Thursday rebuked US telecom regulators for implementing a "net neutrality" policy aimed at guaranteeing open Internet access.

The House of Representatives passed an amendment that would prohibit the Federal Communications Commission from using funds to implement the rules, which bar owners of high-speed lines and airwaves from favoring their own services over those of competitors.

"We all want an open and thriving Internet. That Internet exists today. Consumers can access anything they want with the click of a mouse thanks to our historical hands-off approach," said Representative Greg Walden, a sponsor of the measure.

"I am pleased that my colleagues in the House accepted my amendment to ensure the FCC does not have the funds to implement the controversial Internet regulations."

A similar resolution was introduced in the Senate by Republicans aimed at quashing the "net neutrality" effort, criticized by some as unneeded regulation.

The five-member FCC, in a vote split on party lines, agreed in December to the rules aimed at safeguarding "network neutrality," the principle that lawful Web traffic should be treated equally.

Supporters have argued that the rules are needed to ensure an open Internet but opponents have decried them as unnecessary government intervention.

House majority leader Eric Cantor, a Republican from Virginia, said the resolution is intended to "debunk the FCC's harmful and partisan plan to regulate the Internet."

US carrier Verizon Communications filed a legal challenge to the FCC's rules last month, calling them an "assertion of broad authority for sweeping new regulation of broadband networks and the Internet itself."

The rules are a balancing act by the FCC between support for consumers and the cable and telephone companies that are the main US Internet service providers.

The FCC drafted the rules after suffering a legal setback in April when a court ruled that it had not been granted the authority by Congress to regulate the network management practices of Internet service providers.

The issue has taken on urgency with the emergence of streaming video and TV shows from companies such as Netflix and Apple, which use large amounts of bandwidth. Cable and Internet firms could in theory degrade the quality of those feeds to harm competition, say backers of net neutrality.

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