

# Senate rejects GOP bid to overturn Internet rules

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Senate Democrats on Thursday turned back a Republican attempt to repeal federal rules designed to prevent Internet service providers from discriminating against those who send content and other services over their networks.

Republicans argued that "[net neutrality](#)" rules announced by the [Federal Communications Commission](#) last December were another example of federal regulatory overreach that would stifle Internet investment and innovation.

But Democrats, and the White House in a veto threat, said repealing the FCC rules would imperil openness and freedom on the Internet. "It would be ill-advised to threaten the very foundations of innovation in the Internet economy and the democratic spirit that has made the Internet a force for [social progress](#) around the world," the White House said.

The vote to against taking up the bill, along party lines, was 52-46.

The rules, approved 3-2 with the three FCC Democrats in favor and the two Republicans opposed, tried to find a middle ground between phone and cable companies desiring more control over their networks and the content providers wanting unfettered access to the Internet.

The rules bar service providers from favoring or discriminating against Internet content and services, including online calling services such as Skype and Web video services such as [Netflix](#), that could compete with

their core operations. They require [broadband providers](#) to let subscribers access all legal online content and prohibit [wireless carriers](#) from blocking access to any websites or competing services.

The House, where Republicans command a majority, voted last April to repeal the rules, saying the FCC lacked the authority to set Internet policy and that there was no need for the federal government to intervene in an already [open Internet](#). They said the rules would stifle investment in broadband systems.

The rules, said Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, are "a stunning reversal from a hands-off approach to the Internet that federal policymakers have taken for more than a decade."

She brought up the resolution under the Congressional Review Act, which allows lawmakers to challenge regulations issued by federal agencies. The rules are scheduled to go into effect on Nov. 20.

The FCC, said Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., "would rule as a de facto police of the open and free Internet."

But Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Chairman Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., said the resolution was misguided. "It will add uncertainty to the economy. It will hinder small businesses dependent on fair broadband access. It will undermine innovation. It will hamper investment in digital commerce."

Without a free Internet he said, "there would be nothing to prevent Internet [service providers](#) from charging users a premium in order to guarantee operation in the `fast lane.'"

The rules give providers flexibility to manage data to deal with network congestion as long as they publicly disclose those practices. They do not

specifically ban higher charges for faster transmission of data, but do outlaw "unreasonable network discrimination."

Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., said those trying to overturn the rules say they want to "liberate the Internet when, in fact, what they want to do is imprison the Internet within the hands of the most powerful communications entities today to act as the gatekeepers."

Rockefeller and Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., another backer of the FCC rules, cited a letter to the FCC chairman written before the rules were finalized saying that "a process that results in commonsense baseline rules is critical to ensuring that the Internet remains a key engine of economic growth, innovation and global competitiveness." Among the signees were the CEOs of Google, Inc., Amazon.com, Netflix, Inc., Facebook, YouTube and eBay, Inc.

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