

## Pelosi, Schumer Unveil Democratic Net Neutrality Bill (1)

By Jon Reid

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- Bill would restore Obama-era internet rules requiring ISPs to treat network traffic equally
- House Energy and Commerce Committee to advance measure in next few months

Democratic lawmakers are moving a bill to restore Obama-era net neutrality rules, amid Republican skepticism.

The three-page measure would reinstate rules eliminated by the GOP-controlled Federal Communications Commission that barred internet service providers such as AT&T Inc. and Comcast Corp. from blocking or slowing data traffic on their networks in most circumstances. But it's unclear how much GOP support the Democrats will garner for their bill.

"Democrats are honoring the will of the people and restoring the protections that do this: stop unjust, discriminatory practices by ISPs that try to throttle the public's browsing speed, block your internet access, and increase your cost," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said at a Capitol press conference alongside Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) and other Democrats.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee will mark up the legislation in the next few months, Chairman Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) told reporters. The panel's Communications and Technology Subcommittee is planning a March 12 hearing.

"We're going to guarantee in the Energy and Commerce Committee that we move quickly on this legislation to save the internet because of its importance," Pallone said.

Rep. Greg Walden (R-Ore.), the ranking member of the Energy and Commerce panel, and fellow Republican members Bob Latta (R-Ohio) and Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.), called on Democrats to work with them on legislation.

"Instead of looking to the extremes, and discarding twenty years of bipartisan consensus, we can come together on shared principles to address blocking, throttling, and paid prioritization," the three GOP lawmakers, who have introduced three separate net neutrality bills, said in a statement.

An FCC spokeswoman cautioned against over-regulation.

"The Internet in America today is free and vibrant, and the main thing it needs to be saved from is heavy-handed regulation from the 1930s," Tina Pelkey, a spokeswoman for FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, said in a statement.

NCTA - The Internet & Television Association, the leading cable industry trade group, criticized the Democratic bill, by Rep. Mike Doyle (D-Pa.), saying it would impose utility-style regulations on broadband providers.

"We are disappointed that Democratic leaders would ignore growing calls for bipartisan action, and instead advance a highly controversial, partisan proposal that puts the internet under heavy-handed government control," the group said in a statement.

Public interest groups praised the Democrats' bill, The Save The Internet Act, as a step to protect consumers from the interests of telecom giants, while slamming Republican net neutrality bills as weak on consumer protection.

"None of the three bills House Republicans introduced in February would safeguard Net Neutrality or other online rights," Matt Wood, vice president of policy at tech policy group Free Press Action, said in a statement. "The Save The Internet Act is the only choice for any member of Congress wishing to protect the open internet and do right by their constituents."

The net neutrality bill is Democrats' latest attempt to restore the Obama-era rules, a move which so far has garnered only tepid Republican support.

Three Republican senators joined with all Senate Democrats in 2018 to approve a resolution that would have rescinded the FCC's December 2017 repeal of the Obama-era rules, but it wasn't taken up by the then GOP-controlled House.

"Now we have a Democratic House, and Republicans will have a second chance to right the Trump administration's wrong," Schumer said.

Tech companies, public interest groups, and state attorneys general are challenging the FCC's rules rollback in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

(Updated with additional reporting and statements from Democratic lawmakers )

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