

McCabe campaign: Don't create Internet Apartheid, McCabe tells FCC

Posted on Wednesday, Nov 29, 2017

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Madison, Wisconsin – With the Federal Communications Commission poised to act as soon as December 14 on a proposed repeal of Net Neutrality, the core operating principle of a free, open and non-discriminatory Internet, Wisconsin governor candidate Mike McCabe said today the move would open the door to “Internet Apartheid” and urged the FCC to keep Net Neutrality in place.

“The biggest single challenge facing our state and our country today is economic and political inequality,” McCabe said. “Our government and the economy work really well for a wealthy and well-connected few, and are failing most of the rest of us. Doing away with Net Neutrality would widen the gaps and accelerate the growth of inequality by clearing the way for the creation of what could effectively become two separate Internets – an ultra-fast and comprehensive one for those who can afford to pay substantial premiums for access and a far slower and more limited one for everyone else. This would make it even more difficult for those who have been losing ground to compete economically and fully participate in modern American life.”

McCabe has been an advocate of Internet freedom and a defender of Net Neutrality for many years, dating back to his time leading the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, which in 1996 created and published online the state’s first and only searchable database of political donors and has updated and expanded the online money tracking tool ever since.

McCabe authored a book, *Blue Jeans in High Places: The Coming Makeover of*

American Politics, published in 2014. Chapter 11 deals with the Internet's importance to the future of American democracy and its potential as a tool that could empower tech-savvy youth to substantially remake the country's politics. In the chapter, McCabe wrote: "Today's Internet has been described as an information superhighway. Tomorrow's Internet could become a system of toll roads. Pay to get in the top tier and your site and your service will run fast. Pay less for a lower tier and you're stuck in the slow lane."

The following statement has been sent to the FCC:

Dear Commissioners:

For love of America and everything it stands for, and for the good of our country's future competitiveness globally, do not stoop to digital discrimination and vote to end Net Neutrality.

The Internet's founding principle was that every website, online feature and service should be treated the same. Altering or doing away with the anti-discrimination rules embodied in the policy of Net Neutrality opens the door to what could amount to Internet Apartheid. The emergence of what would effectively become two segregated Internets not only would create an unrecognizable Internet experience for many if not most Americans, it also would stifle economic and social innovation. The level playing field of today's Internet is what has enabled bloggers to compete with global media conglomerates, it is what empowers up-and-coming musicians to build underground audiences long before their songs crack the top 40, it is what has spawned the EBays and Amazons of the world and makes it possible for upstart retailers to compete with big boxes for customers.

With a pay-per-view Internet, it is easy to see how inventors and entrepreneurs and their startups could be muscled out of the marketplace by big corporations that pay for a top spot on the Web. It is easy to see how network operators could amass even greater profits if Net Neutrality is ended, and it is equally easy to see how that would hinder the next generation of inventors and innovators and thinkers and dreamers and anyone else who cannot afford top-tier online access.

Not much imagination is required to see how Internet Apartheid also would shape our politics once the electoral impact of the digital age reaches full flower. The marketplace of ideas would be further tilted in favor of big-money interests. Citizens or groups without the means to buy top-tier service would be further disadvantaged. Political innovation would be further stifled.

Don't do it. Don't vote to end Net Neutrality and create Internet Apartheid.

Mike McCabe

Candidate for governor of Wisconsin