Net Neutrality

Wireless is different. The way it’s used, when it’s used and the technology that makes it possible is all unique to wireless. CTIA-The Wireless Association® strongly believes that prescriptive Internet regulation is unnecessary and has the potential to do far more harm than good. The constraints of regulation in this area would hamper the U.S. wireless industry’s ability to maintain its edge as the world leader in competition, value, innovation and overall satisfaction.

Consumers love the benefits of accessing the wireless Internet anytime and anywhere, so it should come as no surprise that it is the fastest growing broadband service. For many Americans, it is their only broadband service. Wireless providers compete vigorously to differentiate themselves by providing the best coverage, capacity and quality of broadband services on their networks. But unlike cable and wireline broadband, wireless data networks rely on a finite resource—spectrum.

- **Wireless networks are inherently different.** Both regulators and policymakers have acknowledged the many differences between wired and wireless networks. Due to the science and physics of spectrum use, there is only so much capacity that is available. This differs dramatically from other broadband services. One strand of fiber optic cable has more capacity than the entire electromagnetic spectrum. So even if we were able to get the entire spectrum available in the U.S., we still wouldn’t have the same capacity as a single strand of fiber. This reality necessitates unique engineering demands and techniques. It is also important to remember that wireless operates in a dynamic environment. Our customers are nearly always on the move, which is one reason Americans continue to use and rely on their wireless devices. Providers need the ability to constantly adapt, evolve and respond to the changing wireless environment through reasonable network management to ensure all users enjoy the best possible wireless broadband experience.

- **Wireless carriers vigorously compete against each other on network quality and capacity.** With more than 91% of Americans able to choose from four or more facilities-based wireless providers (i.e. national or regional carriers), competition thrives as companies strive to win and satisfy customers. Eliminating wireless broadband providers’ ability to respond in real time with innovative management tools will reduce or eliminate this important competitive aspect of wireless broadband resulting in less innovation and choice for consumers.

- **Regulation has unintended consequences and will impact all parts of the interdependent wireless ecosystem.** Similar to the FCC’s decision to impose “open access” obligations on the 700 MHz C Block license, the imposition of net neutrality on wireless will inject uncertainty into the market. Because wireless has evolved to encompass an ecosystem of carriers, device manufacturers, application developers and others, this can ultimately harm consumers by limiting choice in the marketplace and hampering innovation. The FCC has acknowledged that this is a complex ecosystem, which is why policymakers should be wary of the unintended consequences of altering the interaction between the many elements of this ecosystem.

It’s important to note that in the five years that this issue has been discussed, there is not one example in the wireless market of any harm to consumers that would be addressed in the net neutrality rules. Many consumers don’t realize it, but their wireless use is prioritized. Their voice calls take precedence over their data usage, their interactive data usage is prioritized over their standard data usage and 911 calls supersede all of it. This prioritization makes sense, because it ensures customers have a quality voice and data experience. Consumers don’t want voice calls to have gaps, nor do they want problems connecting to 911 because someone around them is watching a TV show on their mobile device.

Today’s wireless networks are engineering marvels, but usage is increasing at an unprecedented rate. Before moving down the path of increasing regulation, policymakers should carefully consider that the constantly-evolving, financially-healthy, consumer-driven U.S. wireless industry is providing the best experience and value for our users. With limited spectrum and increasing consumer demand, it is critical that wireless providers can continue to innovate and compete in this vibrant marketplace.

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