

Reflections on the May 16th FCC Ruling and Protests

by An MIT Student

I've been following the development of the protests around the recent Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ruling on net neutrality fairly closely over the past few weeks as well as the outcome of the ruling. Here are some of my thoughts about the situation:

First and perhaps most importantly, the protests against the implementation of the new net neutrality rules and standards seem to be strongly supported by the general public. I suspect that this has a lot to do with the proposed changes that will be more directly affecting consumers than previous FCC rulings of the past, namely that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) will be able to collect fees from both customers and companies that provide content over the internet. Unfortunately this means that Netflix, the company that seems to be the primary target of the ruling, as well as other content providers will be forced to pass on ISP costs back onto the consumer, essentially allowing ISPs to double charge. This is understandably unpopular and since services like Netflix have such a wide appeal popular support will be against the recent ruling.

Despite this widespread public support for changes to the ruling as well as physical protests at the FCC building in Washington, run by members of the coalition behind the Stop Watching Us and The Day We Fight Back protests, the FCC seems unwilling to back down from its position. Sadly, for the time being it appears that government officials are more willing to back companies that are incredibly likely to be their future employers than the citizens they are ostensibly currently employed to serve.

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