

Hip-Hop Call Your Senators Today

Written by Davey D ID2757

Wednesday, 21 June 2006 02:13 -

"Hip Hop is over 30 years old. We're not kids no more. This industry is not run by kids. To not involve ourselves in shaping the institutions that we rely on to get our information and music out is irresponsible." – Davey D

Hip hop journalist Davey D has urged those in the hip hop community to call their senators before the Senate takes up the Communications Bill on June 22.

I realize this issue comes across as boring and complicated. And many of these articles are long, but it's important. If you do any sort of business on the Internet THIS WILL EFFECT YOU in a BIG WAY.

The telecommunications companies are spending millions to swing votes in their directions. They even went out and recruited Steve Forbes to speak for them. Yet you have not heard one peep about this on the news. Why is that?

The article below explains in great detail some of the changes we can expect if this thing passes the Senate. I know its long, but you can read it at your leisure. In the meantime please call your Senator, and make sure they are not siding with the Telecommunications companies. Ask them that specifically because they may try and skirt the issue like Senator Diane Feinstein did when I called.

The fact that so many mainstream media outlets have ignored this should tell you something. They stand to benefit by eliminating bloggers and independent news sources who routinely upstage them via the Internet. Please call Your Senators. Again here is the Senator's addresses and phone numbers.

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

Netted-Tomorrow June 22 is D-Day-Senate Votes on Net Neutrality by Gabriel of <http://blog.myspace.com/pandemoniumgabriel>

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The Internet has been a conduit for unfiltered, unfettered freedom. Bloggers and independent news sites have almost as much, if not just as much of an impact as mainstream news sources.

Traditional media sources keep their ears and surfing fingertips sharp as they take leads from less trained, more ingrained in community networking hobbyists, who report the hot news of the hour.

Millions of Internet users search topics, looking for varying angles of every story.

Many times, traditional media sources have been tardy in reporting important events. Those media sources that now have websites offer blogs from reporters, message boards for instant responses of the news, and updated commentary.

Most offer video as well.

The traditional media learned how to interact with the people from reporters who make nothing, or next to nothing monetarily, but due to the Internet, have been able to reach a national and global audience.

Small businesses have been able to have as elaborate websites as huge corporations. Some of those small businesses have even grown so big due to their success in their specific niche huge corporations have bought them.

Independent musical artists can now be on the same stage as major label stars, without paying a fee. My Space has established a networking site that has enabled musicians to promote using the same tools, regardless if their budget is \$10 million, \$10, 000, or \$100. All that is needed is an e-mail address. Once registered, music, videos, blogs, show dates, lyrics, and pictures of the artist can be made available, as well as event invitations and bulletins with links to the online music stores and the artists website.

If the artist has an online store, then s/he can take care of marketing and distribution alone. No w, major labels peddle their artists on My Space and encourage them to post blogs, new music, and videos.

The artists who realize that this is free marketing and promotion have learned to save on promotional budgets.

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The labels, which most assuredly know this, also have learned to save on promotional budgets, especially when many of their artists are ignored at My Space in favor of independent artists.

Yahoo Video and You Tube offer sites where you can upload video, then e-mail it or post it for the world to see. And it is free. Google and Yahoo search topics for their users at no cost. Almost infinite information is potentially a click away.

This year, most of what we have become accustomed to involving the Internet may be altered.

On June 8th, 2006, the United States House of Representatives passed the "Communications Opportunity, Promotion and Enhancement (COPE) Act of 2006." Sponsored by Rep. Fred Upton (R-Mich.), Rep. Charles Pickering (R.

Miss.), Rep.

Bobby Rush (D-Ill.), and Commerce Committee Chairman Joe Barton (R-Tex.), the COPE Bill may be a transition into a new era of the Internet.

Endorsed mainly by telecommunications companies, the COPE Act allows for no hindrance to establishing a two-tiered Internet, where those who pay for premium service get access to video, music, and certain websites, while those who do not pay, get no such access, or lesser quality access. The telecom companies claim that they are entitled compensation because search engine companies like Google, and large bandwidth sites like My Space, are using their "pipes" for free. They also claim that without a two tiered Internet as a means for profit, there is no incentive to invent more dynamic, faster Internet services. From their outlook, innovation is frozen.

Rep. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) offered an amendment to the COPE Bill that would have prohibited a two tiered system, but it was voted down. Opponents of a two tiered Internet fear that the telecom companies are going to discriminate against content directly, or in conjunction with rates that will relegate individual Internet users in the slow lane of the Internet highway. They would rather see the Internet as is, meaning without a tiered system, and the term they use is net neutrality.

They argue that if a company like Verizon has a relationship with Yahoo, they may charge Yahoo a large fee for bandwidth, which would be passed on to the user.

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Or, Verizon could give Yahoo searches priority over Google, making Yahoos searches faster.

Search engines like Yahoo and Google favor net neutrality because they do not want their users to have to pay for their service, nor do they want the telecom companies to divvy up bandwidth. They have grown and prospered utilizing the Internet in its current state.

The issue of net neutrality is somewhat complex as Professor Michael Rappa of North Carolina State University explained via e-mail. He states that: " (1) the last decade of the commercial web has served a very large cross-section of global society very well. Many people should have a vested interest in protecting the Internet as a resource which continues to flourish in a way that benefits the community as a whole;

(2) the Internet is NOT only about commerce. Like all other large and important networks, the interstate highway system for example, [the Internet] needs to accommodate both the family on vacation and the commercial 18-wheeler safely and without diminishing the relative importance of either user."

He goes on to state that "a big part of the problem is that net neutrality means different things to different people, and sometimes the lack of agreement over what it is suits the parties to the debate just fine."

That lays out somewhat of an ambiguous description of what the net neutrality debate is about.

Activists see the **COPE Act** and its rejection of net neutrality as a signal of the end of the free Internet. Scott Goodstein of savetheinternet.com concurs with that sentiment.

Savetheinternet.com was able to generate one million names on a petition supporting net neutrality. Goodstein says that the telecom companies are out for a "money grab." He points out that the U.S. telecom companies claim to be the most advanced in the world and that they need financial incentive in order to create faster speeds and innovations, but the U.S. is actually behind in development.

"There are actually 15 countries ahead of the U.S. in the percentage of its citizens who have access to broadband Internet access," Goodstein said by phone.

"The highest speed in the U.S. is 1.5 megabits per second which is provided at a cost of around \$30 per month. In France, users get 25 megabits per second for about \$6 per month. In some Asian countries, customers are about to start to receive 1000 megabits per second. The argument that U.S. telecom companies need an end of network neutrality in order to provide more than 6 megabits per second is absurd.

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It's a money grab." He also points out that the telecom companies did not invent the Internet and that they "have been subsidized millions of dollars by U.S. taxpayers to provide universal broadband access, but have yet to deliver."

Possibly the darkest possibility if the Senate does not uphold net neutrality, is that telecom companies will outright deny access to certain voices. Telecom companies have been lobbying to assert a free speech right based on a United States Supreme Court ruling that first amendment speakers may not be compelled to provide a platform for a different persons speech. In other words, if the telecom companies do not agree with the position of a particular group or individual, they do not have to make that group or individuals position available to its customers.

The <http://www.SavetheInternet.com> lists several instances in which they claim Internet gatekeepers have discriminated against web sites and services they disagree with. The first states that "in 2004, North Carolina ISP Madison River blocked their DSL customers from using any rival web-based phone service." The FCC addressed that case, but the legal basis for the FCC ruling is no longer

applicable.

Two other instances directly relate to silencing opposing viewpoints. One states that "in 2005, Canadas telephone giant Telus blocked customers from visiting a web site sympathetic to the Telecommunications Workers Union during a contentious labor dispute."

The other states that "in April, Time Warner's AOL blocked all e-mails that mentioned dear AOL.com- an advocacy campaign opposing the company's pay-to-send e-mail scheme." Imagine those applications in these days of media conglomerates and increased presidential and federal governmental power.

That is why such diverse groups such as the Christian Coalition, MoveOn.org, and Gun Owners of America have joined the savetheinternet.com coalition.

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before the Senate takes up the Communications Bill on June 22. He argues that "Those who sided with the Comcast and Verizon are well aware that the ability of ordinary people to communicate to the masses is a problem because its been the only thing holding them accountable. For the last 5 years, the biggest stories about government corruption, corporate swindles, global warming and no weapons of mass destruction has come through Internet bloggers who were able to push an issue to the masses and force Fox, CNN and other news outlets to pay some sort of attention."

He further states "Anyone who is an activist and championed causes ranging from election fraud and Diebold machines, police brutality, freeing Mumia, global warming, media reform and saving the South Central Farm in L. A. - just to name a few. This is will especially hit you hard, because the internet and its neutrality provisions have enabled many of us to counter biased mainstream media outlets get information out about particular causes all over the world."

The issue has been before us since discussions on Capital Hill began last year. We have had plenty of time to mobilize and act, yet many still do not know what is at stake. The Internet has been a place for the hip hop nation to build and elevate beyond the mainstream and a place for activists to organize. Now, it seems the days of the Internet as we know it are numbered. As I am writing this article, the Senate is preparing to take up the debate, and they will be voting on June 22nd.

Davey D says, "Hip Hop is over 30 years old. We're not kids no more. This industry is not run by kids. To not involve ourselves in shaping the institutions that we rely on to get our information and music out is irresponsible."

He is absolutely correct. Hopefully we have all called our senators.

-Gabriel

The vote is tomorrow...