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FCC Boss Claims Net Neutrality Hurts Small ISPs, But The FCC's Own Data Proves Otherwise

from the *fluff-and-nonsense* dept

Failures by Karl Bode Wed, Dec 13th 2017 1:41pm

Filed Under: ajit pai, facts, investment, net neutrality, stats, title ii Companies: airlink internet services, amplex internet

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By now we've noted countless times how the claim that net neutrality hurt broadband investment is indisputably false. It's not a debate. Public SEC filings, earnings reports, and numerous CEO statements to investors (who, unlike you, they're legally not allowed to lie to) have disproven this canard. Data suggesting otherwise usually originates with ISP-paid economists more than willing to twist, distort, cherry pick and massage the numbers until they comply with whatever message is being shoveled toward the media this week.

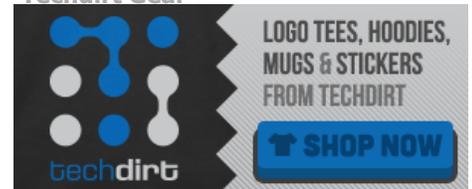
Despite the "net neutrality-killed investment" claim being decidedly false, it never appears to die. ISPs and FCC boss Ajit Pai continue to desperately cling to this claim as if repetition forges reality itself. The claim has played a starring role in nearly every speech Pai has given on this subject, as well as every press release that has been issued by the FCC. The claim popped up yet again recently, when Ajit Pai issued a press release (pdf) claiming that he had been meeting with five small ISPs, all of which claimed that net neutrality had seriously harmed their ability to expand their broadband footprints. From the release:

"I appreciated the opportunity to speak with small providers across the country to hear how the FCC's 2015 rules are impacting them on a day-to-day basis. One constant theme I heard was how Title II had slowed investment and injected regulatory uncertainty into their business plans--in short, heavy-handed regulation is making it harder for smaller providers to close the digital divide in rural America. By lightening the regulatory burden from Washington, we will unleash providers to do what they do best: serve their communities and provide broadband access to residents across the country."

So one, we've already noted how Pai's breathless dedication to "closing the digital divide" are consistently betrayed by his actions, whether it's his choice to make life easier for business broadband monopolies, to kill broadband programs (launched by Reagan and expanded by Bush Junior) that aid the poor, or to fiddle with broadband deployment metrics to try and obfuscate a lack of competition in the sector. Again, that Pai's biggest priority is protecting the revenues of the industry's biggest and most politically-powerful companies isn't

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really something that's open to debate. His voting record is very clear on this subject.

Two, while Pai tries to suggest that small ISPs are unified in their opposition to the rules, nearly [thirty small ISPs](#) have already come out in opposition to the FCC's plan. Those that support the plan tend to be helmed by partisans more interested in partisan ideological fealty than the mounting evidence that suggests the FCC's agenda is extreme and counterproductive.

That said, Pai's press release claiming that net neutrality hurt small ISPs was *completely unaccompanied by any hard data*. Worse, when consumer advocates went and looked at the ISPs cited by the FCC release, four out of five of them [significantly expanded their broadband deployments in the wake of the FCC's 2015 net neutrality rules](#). AirLink Internet Services in Oklahoma, one of the five ISPs cited by Pai, "more than doubled the number of rural Census blocks in which it offered service after the adoption of the [February] 2015 decision it criticizes," according to a [recent FCC filing](#) by consumer advocacy firm Free Press.

Again, the story was the same with four of the five ISPs cited by the FCC. The one ISP that didn't see significant deployment gains (Amplex Internet in Ohio), still managed to deploy gigabit fiber to an additional 18 census blocks during the time net neutrality rules were in place. Again, that's entirely according to the FCC's own data. Data the FCC refused to cite because it proved the exact opposite of the message they wanted to send:

"The data AirLink submitted to the FCC shows that it went from serving 1,482 rural Census blocks at the end of 2014 to more than 3,000 rural blocks by mid-year 2016, he wrote. The company expanded in urban Census blocks as well, going "from 4,251 such blocks to 7,108—an increase of more than 67 percent." The population served by AirLink increased by 64 percent in rural areas and 59 percent in urban areas, Wood wrote.

The ISPs' presentations were "rife with such vague statements and outright errors" but did not include any "dollar signs, deployment data, [or] any other quantifiable metric demonstrating the supposed impact of Title II," Wood wrote. "Perhaps this is because there is no quantifiable harm from Title II, only the anecdotes that these carriers provide when called upon by the Chairman," he wrote."

That's a clever way to state that the FCC's entire justification for repealing net neutrality has been based on fluff and nonsense, not hard data. When the FCC **does** cite data, it's usually data that originates [directly from telecom lobbyists](#) pushing for net neutrality repeal. Much like the FCC's blatant disregard for [public](#) and [expert](#) input on this proceeding, all of this will make for interesting fodder in the lawsuits coming the agency's way in the new year.

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pays or charges. I'll be bypassing them.

Ninja: Sadly I was planning to start using them soon. I'll have to cancel my plans. I can't understand what thought mechanics led to them saying "this is a good idea!" From what I've been seeing they'll lose quite a lot of backers and projects.

Ehud Gavron: I think it was greed mechanics ;)

Jeffrey Nonken:
<https://www.techdirt.com/story/20171213/>

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DannyB (profile), 13 Dec 2017 @ 1:54pm

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Let's ask Mr. Owl, He knows everything!

The FCC's own data proves that it is profitable to the FCC commissioners to say that Net Neutrality hurts small ISPs.

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rorybaust (profile), 13 Dec 2017 @ 1:56pm

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Hoping it wont happen but it will

Indeed as the saying goes "it ain't over till the fat lady sings" but if as suspected the FCC do vote to remove net neutrality I'm actually looking forward to the ensuring court saga, as correct me if I am wrong but the truth matters in those legal places so we might actually get the real truth on the record. Meanwhile European firms learn how to compete in the real world and the once mighty US grow old and fat.

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