

**For Immediate Release**

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**NEXT CENTURY CITIES APPLAUDS THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION'S REINSTATEMENT OF THE NET NEUTRALITY RULES, BUT URGES ADDITIONAL ACTION**

**Washington, D.C. (April 25, 2024)** - Today, the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") [took the necessary step](#) of reclassifying broadband as a telecommunications service under Title II of the Communications Act. With 42 million households offline, today's vote will restore the Commission's oversight authority to protect communities nationwide from longstanding practices that widened the digital divide. Now, Internet service providers can no longer treat consumers differently depending on where they live or how much they make.

Providers are disallowed from slowing or blocking content. Nor can they fail to provide critical service outage data to the Commission when it's needed the most. While the FCC has taken critical steps forward it has also chosen to forebear from applying 26 provisions of Title II, including Universal Service Fund contributions requirements. This forbearance prevents the Commission from fully exploring the options available to it as it investigates USF contributions reform.

The Commission's work today is essential to ensure the Internet and all the content therein continues to be accessible and is not subject to the whims of industry actors. Particularly as the last decade has been marked by mergers between platforms that host exclusive content and facilities-based providers, government intervention is necessary to protect consumers. Bandwidth limits and data caps disproportionately impact residents who need them most, including those who use accessibility tools and multi-generational households with several family members working, learning, and accessing telehealth from home.

**Andy Stutzman, Executive Director at Next Century Cities, offered the following remarks:**

"The Federal Communications Commission's action to reclassify broadband as Title II is a critical step in protecting consumers and holding Internet service providers accountable. Today's decision comes at a crucial time as the Affordable Connectivity Program winds down, putting over 23 million households at risk of losing Internet access, and driving the need for additional consumer safeguards."

**Ryan Johnston, Senior Policy Counsel for Federal Programs, added:**

“With \$42.5 billion soon to be released by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the Commission’s reinstatement of its Title II authority puts in place timely protections for the households that are soon to come online. Ensuring that these new consumers are protected is critical to closing the national broadband adoption gap.

“Similarly, the Commission’s commitment to security and safety is essential. As natural disasters increase in frequency and severity every year, new FCC oversight authority can help monitor and centralize necessary outage and restoration effort information to better inform impacted communities.

“However, while the Commission’s new rules are a major step forward, they do not go far enough. The Commission has chosen not to require broadband only providers to pay into the Universal Service Fund. Failing to require broadband only service providers from paying into this critical fund kneecaps many of the potential future discussions that are sure to be had about USF contributions reform. In essence, the Commission has taken a major funding source off the table just before it begins its investigation into more efficiently funding USF programs.”

**Corian Zacher, Senior Policy Counsel for State and Local Affairs, also added:**

“With innumerable government, financial, and health services now available online, a home broadband connection is more critical than ever to living a full life. Residents need high-quality, reliable, and affordable broadband for students to attend school, wage earners to access employment, and older adults to age in place independently. Restoring the FCC’s Title II authority over broadband is a long overdue step toward providing the consumer protections the public expects of essential services.

“In an increasingly digital economy, Title II reclassification is a step toward common sense regulations that ensure that every resident has the home Internet connectivity they need to participate in society. During the last seven years since the FCC last visited broadband’s classification, regulatory uncertainty has plagued state and local landscapes across the US. Congress should provide community leaders and local officials with the clarity they need to reliably invest in broadband programs by codifying broadband as a Title II service and instructing the FCC to offer comparable consumer protections as it has for telephone and emergency communications.”

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