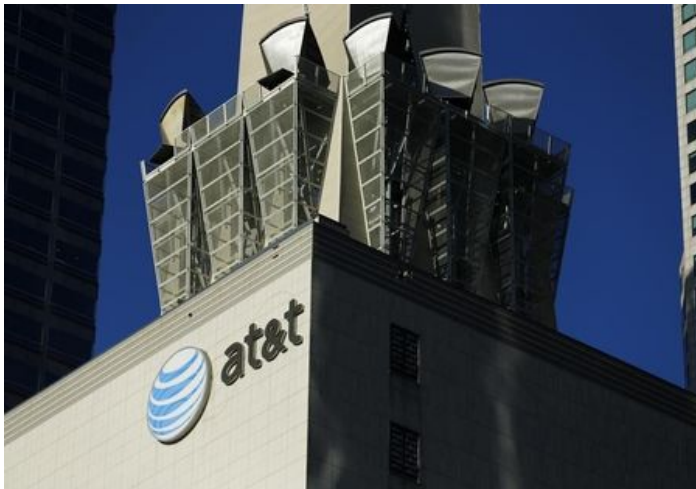


U.S. telecom groups, AT&T seek to block new Internet rules



Reuters

By Alina Selyukh | May 1, 2015



An AT&T logo and communication equipment is shown on a building in Los Angeles

By Alina Selyukh

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. telecom industry groups, alongside AT&T Inc and CenturyLink Inc, called for regulators to block parts of new rules for Internet service providers on Friday, citing "crushing" compliance costs and threats to investment.

In a filing with the Federal Communications Commission, the industry did not ask for a suspension of the principal "net neutrality" rules that ban Internet providers from blocking and slowing down web traffic or from striking deals with content companies for smoother downloads.

Instead, the groups and companies sought to block the agency's move to reclassify broadband Internet as a more heavily regulated telecommunications service and a new broad general conduct standard that prohibits Internet providers from "unreasonably interfering" with consumers' access to the web.

The request, expected to be rejected by the FCC, is a prelude to a building court battle over the rules, which put the agency under public

scrutiny last year as it weighed, once again, how best to regulate Internet service providers.

Cable and wireless companies earlier said they didn't oppose the principles of net neutrality, such as no blocking of any traffic, but rejected the tighter regulatory regime. Friday's filings offer the most specific details yet of the arguments they are now expected to make in court.

A filing at the FCC is a prerequisite to ask courts to block implementation of the rules, which take effect in June, while they are being litigated. The filing came from the USTelecom Association, CTIA-The Wireless Association, AT&T, CenturyLink and trade representing smaller providers.

The document cited several testimonials of executives at regional and local Internet providers that the rules will create costly compliance burdens and limit resources for improvements to broadband networks or new products.

The filing said that the "the sheer burden and complexity of (the) arcane provisions will be crushing," particularly for small broadband providers with limited human and financial resources.

The FCC on Thursday asked to transfer the pending cases against its rules to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, which has twice rejected its previous versions of net neutrality rules but last year confirmed its authority to set Internet regulations.