

## F.C.C. to Try Again on 'Net Neutrality'



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WASHINGTON — The chairman of the Federal Communications Commission will propose new rules to encourage equal access to the web, by pushing Internet providers to keep their pipelines free and open.

The proposal, to be introduced by Tom Wheeler, the chairman of the commission, will prohibit broadband companies from blocking any sites or services from consumers. It will also aim to prevent Internet service providers from charging content providers for access to a faster, express lane on the web.

The move by the commission comes as it begins considering Comcast's bid to buy Time Warner Cable. The deal, which would unite two of the nation's largest cable and broadband providers, has raised concerns that the merged company would have the left to strong-arm providers of Internet content, like Netflix and Amazon, into paying for the right to reach broadband customers.

The plan represents a reboot of sorts for the regulator. A federal appeals court [ruled last month](#) that the F.C.C.'s previous rules illegally treated Internet service providers as regulated utilities, or common carriers, the same as telephone companies.

But the court said that the commission did have authority to oversee broadband service in ways that encouraged competition and the expansion of broadband. In essence, that ruling, by the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, expanded the commission's oversight, prompting the regulator to introduce the latest plan.

The new rules, much like the old ones, would try to restrict discrimination — that is, a broadband service provider would need to follow guidelines that aim to treat all content equally, or face possible enforcement action.

The idea, regulators say, is to keep a level playing field on the web and encourage innovation among smaller businesses. Without the rules, large, rich companies could have an unfair advantage, regulators argue.

But broadband providers like Verizon and Time Warner Cable have pushed back. Those companies have spent billions of dollars upgrading their infrastructure and want to manage those networks as they see fit.

In taking advantage of the ruling, the commission will not seek to immediately reclassify Internet service as a utility — a crucial part of the court case. Mr. Wheeler said that the commission would retain the right to do so, however, if its new rules were approved and appeared not to be working adequately. The commission also said it would not appeal the January court ruling.

Mr. Wheeler said that the commission would step up its enforcement efforts. In part, that will include increased disclosure of providers' network practices.