

Not stuck in neutral

GWA | Students address need for net neutrality in essays

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One of the most hotly debated issues in the public forum in recent weeks has been the upcoming vote on net neutrality.

The Federal Communications Commission is looking to possibly end its current approach to internet content, no longer regulating the web like a public utility, in which all companies must treat all traffic neutrally, but instead allowing internet provider corporations to control bandwidth at will, throttling speeds and possibly restricting customers from content on competitor's websites.

The repeal of net neutrality has brought out a lot of ire from a variety of places, and in Monroe, students at George Walton Academy were among those feeling the urgency of the situation.

Students in Philip Peavy's Advanced Placement Computer Science Principles class recently weighed in on the issue in essays, and all of them are worried about what the end of net neutrality will mean for the future of the internet and public discourse as a whole in America.

Spring Rawl, a sophomore at GWA, wrote about the dangers of ending net neutrality and allowing companies to dictate what can and cannot be seen online.

"This repeal will allow internet service providers to prevent you from accessing some websites unless you pay for them. ISPs will be able to censor content such as a political side that they do not agree

with. Websites will have to pay ISPs, or their website might slow down, making it harder for people to access it.

"The absence of net neutrality will end the equality of the internet and replace it with a hierarchy of websites. The internet's setup will soon be similar to cable providers that you have to pay in order to watch certain TV channels."

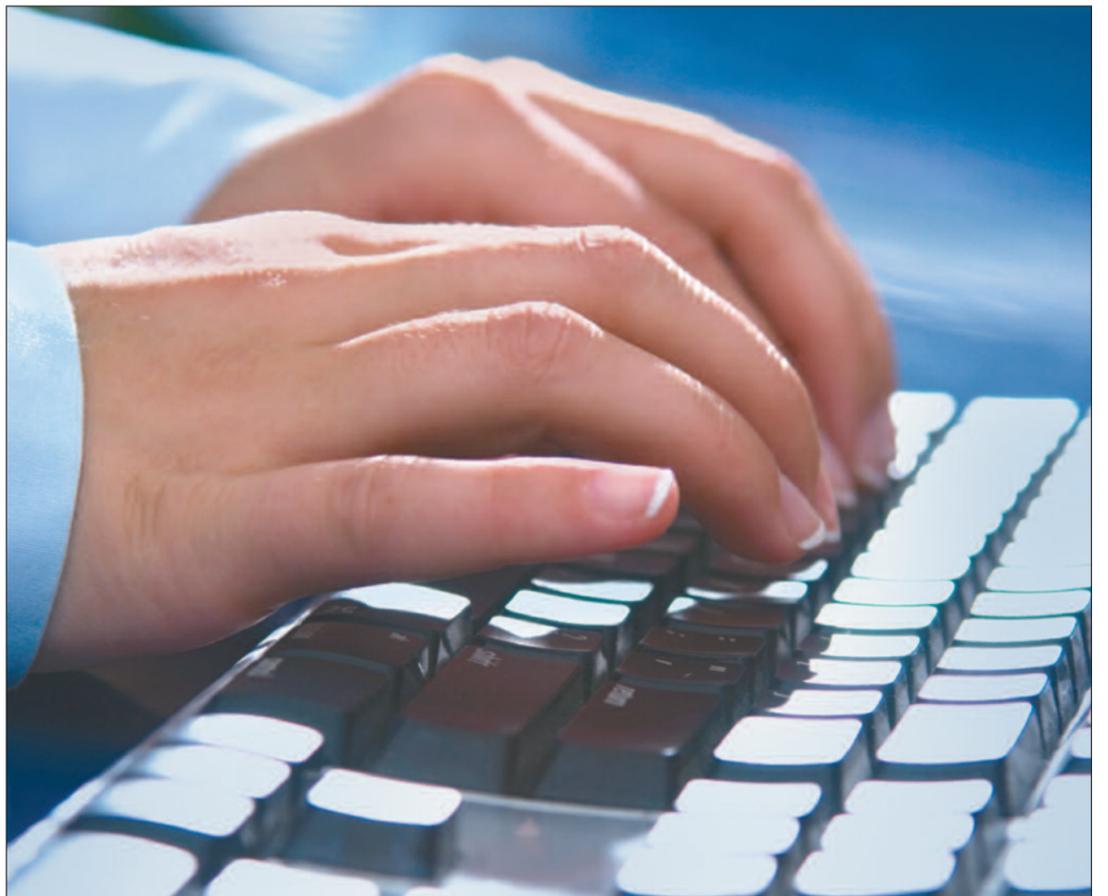
The push for this change, the essays make clear, is the current chairman of the FCC, an ardent opponent of the current net neutrality procedures.

"In February of 2015, the Federal Communications Commission, or the FCC, put stern Net Neutrality Rules into place based on Title II of the Communications Act," wrote sophomore Ben Howard. "This gave the users of the internet the best protection they could possibly have. In November 2017, the FCC chairman, Ajit Pai, made a proposal to take away the laws that guarantee equal access for everyone on the internet. This would allow the internet service companies to charge users to view content and deny access to certain websites. This announcement produced a fight over the freedom of speech and the control of the internet."

The FCC is planning to vote on the issue Dec. 14, but if they do repeal the current rules, court challenges are expected rather quickly.

"The argument of this decision will go through the US Courts of Appeals also. So, this result might take over a year to determine," junior Hannah Steele wrote.

"The internet will still work weather this repeal follows through or not but if it does, it will look



entirely different and even feel that way. Companies could charge just for what you use, or do the opposite. They could charge you more for things you do not use."

For students who grew up surrounded by a free and neutral internet all their lives, the loss of net neutrality is a concept that hits hard.

"Without net neutrality, the internet would not be the same," junior Collin Shiver wrote. "The internet would be a controversial, political warfare between companies and it would not end well. People would choose sides and it would make the powder keg of controversy we have today in America much, much worse."

Koby Dunn, a sophomore at GWA, said the loss of net neutrality will mean the loss of equal opportunity on the web, replaced by rule by corporations.

"Many people are scared that the level playing field will be taken away," Dunn wrote.

"Without Net Neutrality, phone companies and internet providers will be able to determine which apps, content or websites will succeed. They can even decide who will be heard and who is not. These big internet providers would be able to block or slow down access to websites that compete against them."

Dunn also wrote that the end of net neutrality will mean a strike against both students and small businesses.

"The repeal of net neutrality will also affect students by not allowing access to millions of web pages and platforms," Dunn wrote. "The internet provider could allow one student availability to a website, while another could block the student from using it."

"This vote will change

the internet drastically and is important in the continuation of free access. The Federal Communications Commission will have the ability to transform the internet and take away power from many small businesses later this month."

The students have differing ideas of what the end of net neutrality might mean in the long run, but few are good.

"The internet is going to survive, but the repeal of net neutrality is a push towards its weakening," Rawl wrote.

Howard had more extreme opinions on the issue.

"Net Neutrality should be an expectation when the internet is used," Howard wrote. "The internet as we know it would be destroyed without net neutrality."

Steele said she felt the push to end net neutrality was based on little

more than hypotheticals and fear-mongering.

"The chairman of the FCC, Mr. Pai, said in a speech about the net neutrality rules, 'The truth of the matter is that we decided to abandon successful policies solely because of hypothetical harms and hysterical prophecies of doom,'" Steele wrote. "If everyone gave up on the rules because of the potential harms and possibilities of failure we would be left with nothing."

Ultimately, Steele said net neutrality is against the intent of the internet itself.

"Vint Cerf, creator of the internet, designed the internet for everyone to use freely," she wrote. "This repeal is taking that away from it, which is going against the point. It is actually scary to think that the FCC is trying to control what we search, watch, stream and look at."

Dan Dolan
George Walton Academy

Community and traditions remain important at George Walton Academy

Believe me. I understand. You barely have time to catch your breath during the holidays.

This season is filled with busy days and long to do lists. And although it all seems to go by in a blur, there are certain things we always remember.

Think about it for a moment. What stands out in our memories are: people and the traditions we enjoy with one another. At George Walton Academy, we understand the importance of people sharing special times together, building meaningful relationships and creating lasting memories.

Why are traditions and community so im-

portant? As we build meaningful relationships and support one another, not only do we benefit individually, but we teach students how to be active, supportive and engaged members of society. Within strong communities, we learn about one another, and develop a sense of appreciation for other people. Children try new things, take needed risks and spread their wings when they feel surrounded by a community of supportive teachers, parents and peers.

"The GWA community was all that I could have asked for as a high school student. The traditions I took part in remain with me today," said Benjamin Eady, UGA student, GWA Class of 2014. "The

teachers fostered a learning atmosphere that challenged me to critically analyze my own viewpoints without compromising my beliefs, allowing other students and myself to have meaningful conversations on pertinent issues in a safe and understanding classroom space."

We are committed to providing opportunities for the members of our community to gather together in both celebration and appreciation. Traditions and special events are a key component of the life of our school and our events have purpose, designed to be both educational and enjoyable!

We have daily traditions that include standing together for the

pledge of allegiance and opportunities for prayer are provided through many student life programs and bible classes. We also gather for time-honored annual traditions: Homecoming, Dawgs Unleashed, Grandparents' Day, the Lucky Dawg Gala, our moving Veterans Day salute and the popular program when each senior dedicates a personalized Christmas tree to a first grader. That senior-first grader connection continues throughout the year and even beyond. "The senior-first grader relationship means a lot to me," said senior Susanna Grimsley, who has attended GWA since K4. "I was once one of the first graders walking across the stage to receive my

tree, and I have been looking forward to presenting a tree to my own first grader. I love that we have the opportunity to build a relationship with a younger student. My own senior continued to stay in touch with me after graduation and I want to do the same for my first grader."

Our appreciation for the importance of community extends beyond the walls of our school. Since 1969, GWA has been proud to be a part of the Monroe and surrounding community. We believe in contributing to our local area and throughout the world. Our students are committed to service and donate their time and talents to organizations including Operation Christmas Child and

F.I.S.H., as well as projects in Costa Rica. I am inspired by their dedication and giving spirit. For example, GWA is Walton County's largest contributor to the Empty Stocking Fund canned food drive.

As we approach the celebration of our 50th year, GWA will look to the future, as we expand and enhance many exciting programs in technology, global studies, athletics and the arts — but we will also keep our feet firmly planted in the strong roots of the community and traditions that make us who we are.

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