



## Press Release

**Contact:** Marcella Gadson, Director of Communications  
[mgadson@mmtconline.org](mailto:mgadson@mmtconline.org)

### **FCC DECISION TO RECLASSIFY BROADBAND AS A COMMON CARRIER IS A STEP BACKWARD FOR CONSUMERS**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 26, 2015):** Today, the Federal Communications Commission voted to adopt rules to ostensibly promote and protect an open Internet. Responding to calls from the Obama Administration, the general public, and some public interest groups, the FCC’s move to reclassify broadband as a common carrier marks a record-breaking turn in the history of telecommunications. For almost two decades, Information Service Providers (ISPs) have been subject to the bipartisan Clinton Administration’s “light touch” Section 706 of the 1996 Telecommunications Act to govern the direction and growth of the Internet. Today, the Commission returns to key rules imposed by the 1934 Telecommunications Act designed for monopolistic telephone service.

“Today’s decision will have tremendous ramifications on the telecommunications ecosystem,” said MMTC President and CEO Kim M. Keenan. “While MMTC needs to thoroughly review the extensive Order to evaluate its potential impact on our constituents, we have clearly gone backward in how we regulate a tool as dynamic as high-speed broadband. Any use of Title II-style regulation could result in less access, less choice, and more opportunities to tax consumers resulting in a totally different picture than we see today.”

MMTC, along with a range of other civil rights and minority-serving organizations, has advocated that the FCC exercise authority under Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act, supplemented by a consumer-friendly, probable cause enforcement mechanism like Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In a recent *ex parte* to the FCC on this issue, MMTC expressed concerns around the potential unintended consequences on broadband adoption for consumers, most notably people of color, the disabled, the economically disadvantaged, rural residents, and seniors. MMTC also indicated that the FCC create more certainty around the forbearance of rate regulation under their new rules in that same *ex parte*. To ensure that the Commission adheres to the intent of the Chairman’s draft notes, MMTC urged the agency to adopt strict language within the Order that would eliminate ambiguity in both enforcement and application of the proposed rules.

“The FCC must lay out clear rules that withstand legal and, ultimately, judicial scrutiny. This will be a long process,” said Keenan. “MMTC and our partners are advocating that Congress step in and develop clear laws to codify that Americans will not tolerate blocking, throttling, and illegal paid prioritization, the core tenets of true net neutrality. Title II is a long hike away from addressing those issues and takes us backward rather than forward.”

Yesterday, MMTC and other partners launched a social media campaign to push for a legislative compromise on the issue. The campaign, led by the hashtag **#NetLawNow**, urges our communities to push for legislation that will protect the Internet while promoting consumer adoption, access, and continued exponential growth.

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#### **About MMTC:**

The Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC) is a non-partisan, national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving equal opportunity and civil rights in the mass media,

telecommunications and broadband industries, and closing the digital divide. MMTC is generally recognized as the nation's leading advocate for minority advancement in communications.