

The Grouse House Gazette

Weekly Thoughts on Music, Nature, and Politics, from the Catskill Mountains

NET NEUTRALITY

And how coming changes will soon affect your life online...

In April of 2010 a Federal Appeals Court quietly made a decision that will soon affect most of the people in America. And since I assume you regularly use the Internet it will most certainly be affecting YOU very soon. And the news of this decision passed by so quickly that hardly anyone even noticed.

In the past you may have heard something about "net neutrality" but like myself you probably didn't fully understand the issue. And with a lot of political "double speak" it can be quite confusing. So I will try to explain as simply as possible what happened with the appeals court decision, the compromise that resulted, and what will be happening in the near future.

Obviously the greatest power of the internet has been the total freedom it provides to go anywhere you want, see anything you want, and experience thoughts, expressions, and information from all points on earth. But that will soon be changing. In the past this freedom has been known as "Net Neutrality". Everything is equal. And it has allowed an "even playing field" for thoughts, innovations, and competition.

But the powerful special interests behind the telecommunications and cable companies have presented arguments in court that they should be able to control and manipulate the internet information that flows through the broadband networks and portals that THEY own. And in this April 2010 decision by the Federal Appeals Court they won their case and began rolling out a plan to change the totally free and open Internet that we have known for more than twenty years to a multi-tiered world of the future with higher prices, regulation, varying speed, and limited accessibility to some sites and services. Plans also call for charging web sites for accessibility to restricted areas. Barry Diller (whose businesses include Ticketmaster, Expedia, and Match.com) described the changes as being like charging a toaster to be plugged into an electrical outlet. But the ones about to REALLY pay are the consumers. And of course it could also be quite easy through these "levels of access" to control thoughts, ideas, and political philosophies from flowing freely through the web. China is already successful at doing this and the Egyptian government's ability to turn off the Internet took a lot of people by surprise.

The FCC has fought these changes in the interest of consumer freedom but the telecommunications and cable companies control the broadband consumer networks through which we all pass to the Internet. So the fact that the government created the Internet itself did not hold up as an argument. **(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)**

THE GOP's 2012 DILEMMA

At this point in 2007 (20 months before the 2008 election) EIGHT Republicans had declared their candidacies for the office of President. And although many have hinted at the possibilities of their running and come close to announcing, NO ONE has yet officially declared themselves a candidate for 2012. And despite the Fox News echo chamber making it appear that Obama is weak, the word in many political circles is that the President will actually be VERY HARD to beat. And that belief is holding up some announcements... and money.

With a recent poll showing that only 28% of "likely Republican primary voters" fully believe that the President was born in the United States, it has put the GOP in a very difficult and intriguing dilemma. If a candidate wants to win the early primaries they are going to have to appeal to voters at the far right paranoid fringe of American politics. And any candidate that far right of the center almost certainly can't win the general election. And with the current state of things (and the help of Fox News) it looks like it could actually be easy for an extreme candidate to sweep the early primaries and possibly lock down the nomination for a true "tea bagger" presidential candidate. Which could lead to an election similar to 1964 when LBJ waxed the floor with far right candidate Barry Goldwater who only carried five southern states plus his home state of Arizona.

On the other hand if the more traditional Republicans manage to take control of the process and nominate a seemingly more electable centrist such as Mitt Romney they risk an almost certain third party candidate emerging from a new independent "tea bagger" party on the right. In which case Obama could glide easily down the center and also landslide the election. So the dilemma is how can the more traditional GOP "elders" manage to merge with the new "tea baggers" in a unified candidacy when they can't even control their own new freshmen members of congress?

LET'S MEET SOME OF THE CANDIDATES!

Mitt Romney: Whereas the Democrats have in the past nominated candidates coming out of the relative obscurity of small state governments (Clinton & Carter) the GOP has more of a tradition of nominating candidates from their "old boy" network simply because it was "their turn" (McCain & Dole). And that is why many are predicting that former Massachusetts "Stepford-Governor" Mitt will be the candidate. But Romney (being a Mormon) would have a lot of trouble galvanizing the "religious right" that has become one of the cornerstones of the GOP as most believe his church to be a "cult" religion. And of course "Romney Care" looks almost identical to "Obama Care". IF he gets the nomination watch for a V.P. nomination from the far right for balance.

Tim Pawlenty: The current governor of Minnesota is the best at bridging the crevasse between the two sides of the GOP. His recent statement that he wanted the GOP to be the "party of Sam's Club, not just the country club" was certainly a nod in that direction. But equating his party's future with a company that has exported more jobs to China than any other, destroyed the American "main street", and is currently defending itself against the largest class action discrimination lawsuit in history seems like an odd choice for a goal. But when you think about it, he might be right on target!

Donald Trump: "The Donald" has recently stated that he will not decide whether he is running until after the new season of the "Celebrity Apprentice". Which I'm sure is quite profitable as the "talent" costs for such "has-beens" as survivor winner and ex-con Richard Hatch, Dionne Warwick, David Cassidy, Meatloaf, and La Toya Jackson, probably doesn't make for a very high "overhead". But at least he has his priorities in order!

There are literally FIVE possible GOP presidential candidates that have been until recently on the payroll of Rupert Murdoch's Fox News. And this past week, in a rare and odd attempt at a facade of credibility, Fox suspended the contracts for Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum as the network said they were getting too close to actually becoming candidates. And here they are... **(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)**

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NET NEUTRALITY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

But thankfully in December the commissioners of the FCC were able to pass a compromise that would allow our "land based" internet of home and business computers to remain as they always have been but would change the mobile internet of smart phones and iPads to the new multi-tiered and regulated Internet of varying prices, speeds, and accessibility. This new compromise is actually being called "Net Neutrality" even though it is a long way from the total freedoms we have experienced in the past. Which makes it confusing as the term previously meant that EVERYTHING would be free and open.

The five FCC commissioners voted straight down party lines with the THREE Democrats voting FOR the compromise and the TWO Republicans voting AGAINST (or in favor of ALL internet service in the future being restricted and regulated). The Republicans obviously had the telecommunications and cable lobbyists firmly behind them.

But how will the Republicans possibly sell their positions to the public?

This past week in an astounding Orwellian "truth speak" scenario straight out of the novel 1984, House Speaker John Boehner gave a speech in Nashville WARNING of a "government takeover of the internet" with descriptions of the FCC's limitation of the freedoms of the phone and cable companies. It was so insane it was like he was declaring that the sky was GREEN. But with the strong backing from lobbyists the Republicans are preparing a "truth speak" campaign to try to convince the public that the continuation of the internet freedoms that we have been experiencing for the past twenty years are in fact a "government takeover" of the internet by the FCC. And Boehner tested this approach far from the cameras and media coverage through his speech in Nashville. Up is now down. Black is now white. And we need to keep the Internet free from government takeover by handing the control over to special interests so that they can regulate our access to it.

But with the success of their recent campaign convincing the public that a health care bill that handed all of the business over to privately held insurance companies was a "government takeover" that also included "death panels" for the elderly, they are obviously feeling cocky about their abilities to twist the truth into a pretzel logic of conflicting realities that could once again turn the people against their own self interests. CONTINUED AT TOP CENTER

But they have already won with the coming changes for our cell phone and iPad data plans. And if we don't educate ourselves and fight back, they could also soon be successful at regulating and developing ALL Internet access into this new multi-tiered regulated world. We are seriously losing freedoms here. And no one seems to know anything about.

The future simply isn't what it used to be.

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GOP DILEMMA (From Page 1)

The Fox Candidates:

Rick Santorum - An anti-science Ex-Senator from Pennsylvania who like the other Fox candidates does not believe in evolution or global warming, has the claim to fame of wanting to privatize the National Weather Service with a campaign contributing company called AccuWeather. He also has an anti-gay agenda so extreme that he famously blamed the Catholic Church sex scandal in Boston on the liberal environment of Massachusetts.

Newt Gingrich - Hoping voters have a short attention span Newt" is the man who as Speaker of the House was behind the impeachment of Bill Clinton for having sex outside of marriage while also having sex outside of his own marriage at the same time. Married three times he was having his first staff affair when he delivered the divorce papers to his first wife while she was in the hospital suffering from cancer. Can you imagine what the press would do to a Democratic politician who had an affair with a younger woman while his wife was suffering from cancer? But you don't HAVE to imagine. Just ask John Edwards. Speaker Newt had 84 ethics charges brought against him and eventually was fined \$300,000. He resigned as Speaker in disgrace after leading the party to devastating political losses. And he's further to the right now with warnings of Muslim Sharia law taking over the United States.

John Bolton - His only claim to fame was being temporarily appointed by George W. Bush as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Because of his extremist views the Senate never approved his appointment and he was replaced after fifteen months. But he has used his "Former U.N. Ambassador" title to help establish credibility on Fox News as a foreign affairs "expert".

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Mike Huckabee - He has his own prime time show on Fox and is currently promoting the obligatory "getting ready to run" book. And since beginning his splash around the Fox mosh pit two years ago he has gone from being the former "warm and cuddly" GOP candidate that even liberals found hard to dislike to being a near "birther" catering to the far right. The last time he ran, his platform included an amnesty plan for illegal aliens. But not anymore. This past week while being interviewed on radio he went into an explanation that Obama had a different worldview as he had "grown up in Kenya" with a Kenyan father and grandfather as he explained Obama's "pro Mau Mau" anti-colonial views. But Obama's father left his mother and son when he was two, and he never set foot in Africa until he was 28. Huckabee also implied that Obama had been educated in Muslim madrassas schools in Indonesia when in fact he attended Catholic schools. And it is odd that Fox hasn't also suspended him but with his own show AND new book I'm sure he wants to pump as much money out of the tea baggers as possible before declaring his candidacy.

Sarah Palin - Enough said... But I'm sure she will keep up "the tease" of running as long as possible to milk every last dime out of her dwindling fan-base before decided NOT to run in favor of being a fading un-reality show footnote in American history. John McCain should be ashamed of himself.

WIN ONE FOR THE GIPPER!

The one thing that ALL of these candidates have in common is that they all claim Reagan as the inspiration for their political ideology. Which is odd when you realize that in today's extreme GOP environment Reagan would never be able to get the nomination, as he would be far too liberal. He raised taxes seven of his eight years in office, he greatly grew the government and tripled the deficit, he cut and ran from Lebanon after losing hundreds of marines, he negotiated and made deals with terrorists, he granted amnesty to millions of illegal aliens, and he was less popular in his time in office than Kennedy, Clinton, Eisenhower, Bush the 1st, and even LBJ.



THANKS FOR READING!

Gilbert Hetherwick

Write me with comments or to subscribe at Hetherwick@mac.com And to read back issues go to: WWW.GILBERTHETHERWICK.com